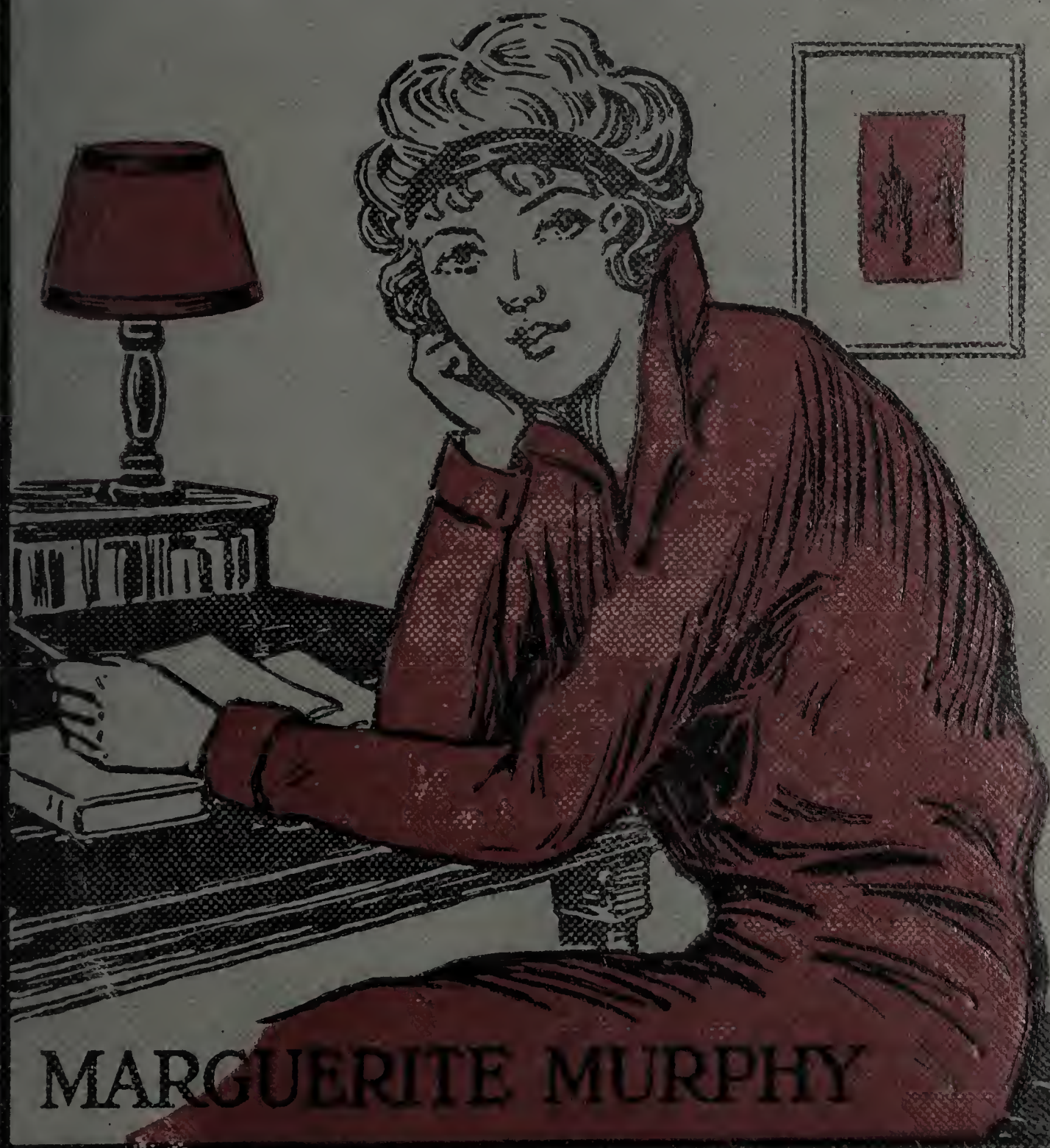


PATRICIA'S PROBLEM



MARGUERITE MURPHY



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PATRICIA'S PROBLEM

BOOKS BY
MARGUERITE MURPHY

*Picture Jackets in Colors and Illustrations by
Elizabeth Withington*

Price, \$1.50 each

PATRICIA FROM NEW YORK

PATRICIA AND THE OTHER GIRLS

THE STORY OF A SUMMER CAMP

PATRICIA'S PROBLEM

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.
BOSTON



“GOOD FOR YOU, PATRICIA! I WASN’T SURE YOU HAD IT
IN YOU!”—Page 197.

PATRICIA'S PROBLEM

By
MARGUERITE MURPHY

Illustrated by
ELIZABETH WITHINGTON



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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PATRICIA'S PROBLEM



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PATRICIA'S PROBLEM

CHAPTER I

PATRICIA ASKS ADVICE

PATRICIA came into her mother's room quietly. Her head was held high, and her eyes flashed. Mrs. Strickland looked up in surprise from the letter she was writing. After one look at her daughter, she laid down her pen.

"What is it, Patricia?" she asked.

Patricia walked to the window and gazed out. For a few minutes she was silent. Mrs. Strickland said no word. From below came the sound of a machine-driven lawn-mower. "Happy Haven," the country place of the Stricklands, was large and beautiful. The huge lawn stretched away smoothly to the shores of a lake. From where Patricia stood she could glimpse a corner of the luxurious garden and a bit of the tennis courts. Early September sunlight gilded grass and trees.

But Patricia was not seeing the beauty below her. She was frowning very hard, almost, it seemed, trying to keep back tears. She turned abruptly.

“Mother, I just don't know what to do.”

“In what way, Patricia?”

“School starts in two weeks, a little over. I don't want to go.”

“You don't want to go?” Mrs. Strickland was greatly surprised.

“Well, yes,” —Patricia turned back to the window,—“of course, I do want to go. I've always loved it at Miss Brent's, but—”

Again silence, broken only by the sound of the mower.

“I don't understand.” Mrs. Strickland wore a puzzled frown.

“Mother,” began Patricia in a choked voice, “I came home early from Marion's party last night.”

“Yes, dear, I know you did.”

“Yes, but you don't know *why*.” Patricia whirled again fiercely to face her mother.

Mrs. Strickland said nothing, only shook her head.

“Well, I came home because I wouldn't smoke and I wouldn't drink. They all

laughed at me. They all said I was a—well never mind that. They said a party was no fun unless you did those things. But out at Grandma Parson's we never did anything like that, and we did have such good times!"

Patricia stopped with a gulp.

Mrs. Strickland stood erect.

"Does Marion's mother know what kind of a party this was?"

"No, I don't suppose so. No, the mothers don't know—mostly. They're hardly ever there. They're too busy to care."

"But—but—" Mrs. Strickland was at a loss for words. "Marion! Why, Marion Howland is the daughter of Alicia Howland. She has always been such a delightful child."

"Yes, I know, Mother," answered Patricia, a bit impatiently. "All the girls are like that. When they're with older people, they pretend to be proper, and all that sort of thing. It's part of the game. But they aren't—not really."

"That's lying," protested Mrs. Strickland.

Patricia shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't think they mean it that way, exactly. I used to do it myself, some, before I went West. I learned a lot out there."

"Patricia!" Mrs. Strickland was shocked.

"Why, of course I did. Every one does it. Have you forgotten about Roy Walker?"

"Hardly."

"He was there last night," said Patricia, in a low voice.

"Patricia!"

"Oh, it was quite all right. He didn't come of his own accord. Mrs. Howland invited him. You know Marion has always admired him immensely. Not that I mind that," Patricia added hastily, a bit too hastily. "But he was—" Again Patricia stopped and bit her lip.

"Well?" prodded her mother gently.

"Oh, he wanted to know where I got this 'goody-goody stuff.' He said I used to be a real sport; that I could be the most popular girl in the crowd, if I only wanted to behave."

"Behave? What did he mean by that?"

"Behave as the rest of them do, I suppose. But I won't! I won't! I told him I didn't care whether I was popular or not, only," Patricia gulped, "of course I do care—terribly. I've always been in the center of things, and it hurts to be left out."

“Left out? Of what?” asked Mrs. Strickland.

“Oh, they planned three or four things right there, last night. I wasn’t included in a single one. Oh, I know how they work. I’ve seen them ostracize before. I’ve done it myself, in fact.”

“But Patricia, aren’t you better off out of these things?”

“Yes, I suppose I am. But most of those girls are in my set at school. They’ve always looked up to me. That’s why I don’t want to go back to Miss Brent’s. It’s—it’s bad enough being left out of the picnics and swimming parties out here in the country, but when I get back to town, and in school—Oh, Mother, what shall I do?”

Mrs. Strickland opened her arms, and Patricia crept into them. They were silent for a long time. Finally, Mrs. Strickland spoke.

“I’ll talk it over with your father,” she said.

But Mrs. Strickland’s talk with her husband did not produce any startling results.

“Not the girls we know! Surely they don’t do these things!” he protested.

“Patricia says so.”

Mr. Strickland frowned.

"Why don't you go to Mrs. Howland and tell her what Patricia has just told you?"

"Why don't you go to Robert Howland," retorted Mrs. Strickland, "and tell him we will no longer allow Patricia to associate with Marion?"

Harvey Strickland bit his lip.

"There must be other girls—nice girls—at Miss Brent's."

"Marion Howland and the other girls who are Patricia's friends are supposed to be the very 'nicest' girls at Miss Brent's."

Mr. Strickland began to pace the floor, his hands in his pockets. Suddenly the look of concentration left his face, and he glanced at his wife.

"This worry of yours has made me completely forget. An unexpected tangle has come up in my work. I shall have to go to Europe,—be gone for the next six months perhaps. Naturally, I had expected you to go along. Patricia can go to school over there. She has always wished to do so."

Mrs. Strickland's face cleared.

But Patricia most unexpectedly balked at this.

“I do want to spend a year in France, but not this year. I’ll finish the year at Miss Brent’s. I’ve grown away from the girls enough in one year. In two I’d be absolutely forgotten. I’d rather go to France next year.”

“But I thought you wanted—” began her father.

“No, Dad, I don’t want to run away. Please understand. This is my battle. I won’t run away, even if I am defeated.”

“You’ll be most unhappy, especially if your father and I go to Europe.”

“No matter,” reiterated Patricia. “I won’t run away.”

“Where is Mary Taintor? What is she planning for this year?”

“I don’t know.” Patricia’s face lighted for an instant. “I suppose I could board, if Mary were there. But she’s been here in the United States all summer. Likely she’ll be off somewhere this winter, especially after boarding at Miss Brent’s all last year.” The light died out of her face.

“Then you think you want to stay at Miss Brent’s this year?” asked her father.

“I’ve got to stay.” Patricia’s lips set in a

firm line that made her mother think of Grandma Parsons.

“Well, I’ll say your year in Westcott did considerable for you, Patricia! Would you like to go back there?” asked her father.

“No, father, not this year.” Again Patricia’s face lighted suddenly. “I know what I’ll do. I’ll write Grandma Parsons, and ask her advice. She seems to have a remedy for most of the mentionable ills of this world!”

CHAPTER II

ROBERTA'S PICNIC

THE next few days seemed interminable to Patricia. She did not hear from Grandma Parsons. More than once she was aware of automobiles filled with her various friends, speeding here and there on pleasure trips. But she held her head high and pretended she did not care.

Only once was Patricia included in any of the gay doings. One afternoon, while she was trying to become interested in an uninteresting book, she was called to the telephone.

“Oh, Patricia,” simpered a voice over the wire. “Four of us are going down to the beach on a picnic. Wouldn't you like to come along?”

There was silence for a minute, then Patricia asked, “Who are the four, Isobel?”

“Oh, Marion and Roberta Howland, Nancy Stevens, and myself.”

“Bobby Howland!” Patricia was surprised out of her cool attitude.

Roberta Howland was Marion's younger sister, and well deserved the name of "Bobby."

"Yes," simpered Isobel, "she is going to start at Miss Brent's this fall, and this is by way of a 'rushing' party for her. We want her in the Turk's Head Club of course. No doubt she will come in, anyway, since Marion belongs, but—"

"I thought," interrupted Patricia, and her voice was cooler than ever, "that Miss Brent emphatically stated that no girl was to be rushed before the opening of school. I'm sure none of the other three clubs do it. I think Turk's Head ought to stand on its honor as much as any of the other three."

"Oh, no one will know about this," said Isobel.

"I'm sorry," said Patricia, and by now her voice was frigid; "I don't believe I care to come to your picnic."

"Oh, please," wailed Isobel.

"Impossible!"

"O dear!" wailed Isobel again. "Bobby says she positively won't come unless you do."

Patricia's heart skipped a beat.

"I should like very much to go on Bobby's picnic; but if I do, not one word is to be said

about Turk's Head. And I want it clearly understood that this is *not* a rushing party."

The old, imperious Patricia was speaking.

"All right," agreed Isobel. "I don't imagine it is going to be very easy to rush Bobby, anyway."

"No," agreed Patricia dryly, "I don't imagine she will take to it very kindly."

A memory of Bobby with her impish smile and boyish, ungainly grace rose before Patricia, a very vivid memory in which Bobby, flat on her face, was endeavoring to fish a two-thirds-drowned kitten out of a deep pool amid the rocks on the shore.

"Silly little thing!" Bobby had said, smiling up at Patricia. "She thought she could swim! Wouldn't you think a cat would have more sense than that?"

"Whose kitten is it?" Patricia had asked.

"Goodness! I don't know. Just an old barn cat, I suppose." Bobby had arisen, holding the dripping, meowing kitten by the scruff of its neck. "Homely little thing, isn't it?"

"It's not very beautiful," Patricia had agreed.

Bobby had given the kitten a shake.

"I always did hate cats," she had said. "Silly little things! Now, if this had been a dog, he'd never have fallen in, or if he had, he'd have had sense enough to get out again, some way. I even have to shake this. Any dog would do *that* without being told."

"What are you going to do with it, now that you've saved it?" Patricia had asked.

Bobby had looked at the older girl with a sheepish grin.

"Oh, I suppose I'll have to add it to the menagerie."

It was a well-known fact among the younger folks of that Long Island summer colony that Bobby Howland was always picking up stray creatures, and caring for them. Her "menagerie" had contained at various times, besides the usual number of dogs and cats, a monkey, a goat, three hens, two ducks, and, though for an extremely short period, a sea-gull with a trailing wing.

And now Bobby Howland was going to Miss Brent's. Patricia half smiled and half sighed. The winter ahead was going to be anything but clear sailing for Bobby and for herself.

The picnic started off gayly enough. Marion drove her roadster, much to Bobby's disgust.

"You drive a car like a shoemaker," she protested. "Now if you'd let me take the wheel—"

"When you acquire a little sense," Marion retorted, "perhaps Dad will let you have a car of your own."

"Perhaps," answered Bobby ruefully, "but I doubt it."

"So do I!" snapped Marion.

Bobby turned around to speak to the three girls in the rear seat.

"Sometimes," she said, "I think I must have been adopted into the Howland family."

"Don't be so ridiculous, Roberta," said Marion sharply.

Bobby looked at her sister. When Marion used the name Roberta, it was always a sign of anger on the older girl's part. Bobby subsided with a sigh.

"At least, I should have been a boy."

For a few minutes there was silence. Then Bobby sat up quite suddenly.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"To Benson's Cove," replied Marion.

"To Benson's Cove!" ejaculated Bobby.

"Why Benson's Cove? I thought we were

going on down toward the Point. It's much nicer out that way."

"Benson's Cove is much nearer town," said Marion with a superior smile.

"I can't see what difference that makes!" protested Bobby.

"You will!" Marion threw a fleeting smile to the girls in the rear seat. Isobel giggled, Nancy wriggled, but Patricia sat up very straight.

What was Marion up to now? There was something in the air. What could it be?

However, Marion drove the car straight to the Cove, down on to the beach, and stopped. Bobby was the first one out, the others following leisurely.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bobby. "I'm going for a swim."

"Don't be ridiculous! Of course you're not!"

"But I am. I even brought a bathing-suit for you."

"You needn't have bothered," said Marion. "I have no intention of going in. In the first place, there are no bath-houses here."

"Why, Marion, of course there are. Benson has a whole string of them."

“Benson!” sneered Marion. “Those dirty little cubby-holes! No one ever goes swimming at Benson’s. Why, I—”

“Well,” interrupted Bobby hotly, “just because you and your crowd don’t approve of Benson’s, that’s no sign there’s anything wrong with it. Those cubby-holes are as clean as soap and water and a scrub-brush can make them. Perhaps there aren’t half a dozen showers, tile floors, silk tents for the beach, or any of the fixings, but just the same it’s clean and all right. I go there—lots of times,” she threw in for good measure.

Marion gave her sister a disgusted look, but said no more.

“Let’s eat first, anyway,” giggled Isobel.

“But we shouldn’t swim directly after eating,” protested Patricia.

“I have no intention of swimming, either before or after eating,” said Marion crossly.

“And it’s much too early for lunch!” protested Bobby.

“Not for us!” Again Marion looked meaningfully at the other two girls, and again Isobel giggled, joined this time by Nancy Stevens.

Bobby swung quickly to face her sister.

“What are you up to now?” she asked.

"Well, since you must know, we are going on into town."

"Into town!" ejaculated Bobby. "Whatever for?"

Patricia was as startled as Bobby, but she said nothing. She was half prepared for some such maneuver.

"We're going in for tea," said Marion airily, although her cheeks were flushed.

"My gracious!" ejaculated Bobby. "You'll never make it."

"Oh, yes, we will," said Marion, still airily. "It's only two and a half hours' run."

"Yes, if you drive like the wind. And you'll certainly be late for dinner."

"Oh, I have plenty of excuses for that," said Marion haughtily.

"All right, go on and go," said Bobby. "I'm going to stay here."

"I'll stay with Bobby," gulped Patricia.

"Oh, very well!" said Marion.

"That suits Marion," snickered Isobel. "We're going to meet Roy Walker, and some of the others. Marion would just as soon leave you behind, Patricia."

Patricia tossed her head. Her cheeks were flaming.

“Why wasn’t I told of these plans?” she demanded furiously.

“Yes,” Bobby chimed in. “I thought this was to be my picnic.”

Marion turned on her younger sister.

“It was planned as a picnic for you, but *Miss Strickland* objected. Then these other plans came up. I didn’t tell you, Bobby, because you’d go tattle; and I didn’t tell Patricia because—”

“That’s not fair,” cut in Bobby hotly. “I’ve never tattled on you in my life!”

“Well,” admitted Marion reluctantly, “you wouldn’t *say* anything, but you wouldn’t go, and Mother would want to know why, and it would be rather difficult to explain.”

“Yes, I should imagine it would be *rather* difficult.”

“Well,” Marion tossed her head, “Mother treats me like a baby. I’m old enough to go where and with whom I please. If she objects, that’s her fault. Besides, I promised Roy—”

“Come on, Bobby,” Patricia broke in quickly. “I’ll use that extra suit and go swimming with you. They can leave our share of the lunch. We’ll eat when we come back.”

A new consideration struck Bobby.

“How are we going to get home, Patricia and I?”

“Oh, you can wait for us!”

Marion's voice was furious as she turned to the car to get out the hamper. Isobel and Nancy snickered in chorus.

Bobby turned to Patricia, a comical look on her face.

“Like to hike?” she asked.

“Love it,” said Patricia, “but let's swim first.”

“I think,” said Bobby loudly, as she and Patricia started down the beach, “I think they ought to leave *all* the lunch for us. We'll be starved, and they won't need it if they're going to have tea.”

Patricia's heart was sore, but she kept a brave face. And somehow, as soon as she was out of sight and hearing of the other three girls, she did begin to enjoy herself. Bobby kept up a continual chatter. It was plain that the younger girl was delighted with the turn affairs had taken.

Although Roberta had never admitted it, even to herself, Patricia Strickland was her ideal. And to have a whole afternoon alone with her was nothing less than perfection.

The cubby-holes were, as Roberta had said, immaculate. The suit which Patricia donned was not a particularly good fit; but the beach was splendid, the surf not too high, and altogether they had a most enjoyable swim despite the chill in the air.

Ravenous, they rushed back to the picnic spot. Plenty of lunch had been left for them, and they made quick work of the delicious fried chicken, sandwiches, and dainty little cakes.

The tramp home in the autumn sunlight was anything but a hardship.

“There are times,” Bobby said as she finally parted from Patricia, “there are times when I’m glad I haven’t a car.”

Patricia ran into the house, still exhilarated from her strenuous afternoon. And the first thing she found awaiting her was a letter from Grandma Parsons.

CHAPTER III

JOYCE DECIDES

WHEN Grandma Parsons received Patricia's letter, she sat down abruptly in the big rocking-chair. Was all her good work to go for nothing? Patricia's letter didn't sound like it. What was this she said?

"We had just as good times out there in Westcott as anybody could have, Joyce and Ray and myself, all of us, and we didn't do the things the girls here find it necessary to do. Of course, Raoul is here in town, and I am planning to see him this winter. He has been out here only once. He is extremely busy just now, Dad says. But what's bothering me now is school. I won't smoke and flirt and lie, so I am left out of things. And though I won't admit it to Mother and Dad, it does hurt to be left out. Don't misunderstand, Grandma Parsons. These girls all belong to my set. They are what Westcott people call 'nice girls.' What shall I do?"

Grandma Parsons let the sheet fall to her lap. All well and good to be able to direct Patricia's destiny here in the small town of

Westcott, but New York was a different proposition entirely. Grandma Parsons sighed. Her hands were tied. And yet—were they? She sat up energetically.

“Every riddle has an answer,” she said aloud to the empty room. “I’ve solved a good many in my day, and I’m not too old to solve this ‘one.’” Her lips set in a grim line.

“Who’s talking about riddles?” Joyce rushed in, letting the screen door bang behind her, as usual.

“Joyce!” Grandma Parsons smiled at her. “How’s school?”

Joyce slumped into a chair, sprawling in an ungainly attitude.

“Oh, it’s just terrible. You’ve no idea how terrible it is without Patricia and Ray.”

“But Ray wasn’t in school,” protested Grandma Parsons.

“I know, but I always knew he was about. Bobbie expressed my feelings exactly this morning.”

“What did he say?” The corners of Grandma Parson’s lips twitched.

“He said he wished every old schoolhouse in the whole world would burn down some

night; then he wouldn't have to go to school any more."

Grandma Parsons laughed merrily.

"Rather drastic measures, but it would solve Bobbie's problems for the time being, anyway. Perhaps I'd better get his advice on this letter."

"What letter? From Patricia? Oh, may I read it?"

"I'll read it to you, parts of it, anyway," corrected Grandma Parsons gently.

But when she once started to read the letter, she became so interested again, that, before she knew it, she had read Joyce the greater part of it. Before she had finished, Joyce was sitting up straight, her cheeks flushed, her hands clenched.

"I'd do something," she interrupted, "I'd show them. I'd fight. I'd do something."

"All very well and good," Grandma Parsons pulled her spectacles down and looked at Joyce over the top of them, "but just what would you do?"

"I'd start a club of my own. I'd show them."

"But how could you start a club when all your friends refused to belong?"

“Ray’s there.”

“But Ray isn’t a girl; he doesn’t go to school, and altogether he isn’t much of a help,” explained Grandma Parsons gently.

“Well, I’d find somebody. I’d go out into the highways and byways and pick them up,” said Joyce fiercely.

“From what I know of Miss Brent’s school that would scarcely be successful.”

“But there must be some one! Patricia’s such a peach! I wish I were there. I’d tell them a thing or two.”

Grandma Parsons looked at Joyce startled.

“There’s an idea!”

“Where? What?” Joyce was surprised out of her fierce mood.

“Never mind,” Grandma smiled mysteriously. “I’ll let you know later.”

In spite of all her coaxing, Joyce could get no further enlightenment, and finally went home, a very much bewildered girl.

Grandma Parsons was indeed busy for the next day or two, sending telegrams, making calls, and all the time going around with a most mysterious smile on her face.

Two days later Joyce came home from school, dropped her books on the table, and

flung herself rather despondently on the worn leather couch.

"O dear!" she sighed. "My senior year! I thought it was going to be such fun, and instead it's going to be just terrible."

"What's the trouble?" asked her mother, who was in her customary place by the window, darning stockings for the boys.

"Oh, everything! We thought Leile Grey would be president, and she isn't even going to be here. Jimmy Foster has dropped out. He flunked in two subjects last year, and isn't going to finish at all. The class has just gone all to pieces; and I miss Patricia much more than I had any idea I should, and Ray even more than I thought possible. I just hate to think of the whole year. Even Irma spends all her time running around with with Celia Laurence."

Mrs. Hunter, usually so sympathetic to any of her children's woes, only smiled to herself.

"There are still Timmie and Bobbie."

"And Bingo," added Joyce. "It's too funny to see Bobbie and Bingo in the school-yard. Did you hear what happened to them yesterday?"

“No. Now what?” asked Mrs. Hunter with a resigned sigh.

Joyce sat up with a little giggle.

“I was looking out of the cloak-room window. I had a few minutes between classes. You know you can see right into the grade-school yard from there. It was just recess time. Bingo seems to have an instinct that tells him just when recess is, because he always comes trotting solemnly along just as the children come out; then when they go in again, he trots back home.”

“I never knew that,” said Mrs. Hunter. “What was Bobbie up to?”

“Bobbie was tossing his new cap up in the air over something. I don’t know what it was he felt so good about, but that was the way he was expressing it.”

“He shouldn’t do that with his new cap,” said Mrs. Hunter reprovingly.

“Bobbie is terribly careless with his clothes,” said Joyce, a twinkle in her eyes, then hurried on with her story before her mother could protest. “Well, Bobbie kept on throwing his cap in the air, but once when it came down, he failed to catch it. Of course Bingo was right at his heels and grabbed it.

Bobbie started after Bingo. Bingo thought it was a good game and chased madly all over the school yard, Bobbie after him. Just at that moment the bell rang that ends recess. Poor Bobbie! He'd run a few steps toward the line going in, and then a few steps after Bingo. You can imagine what joy that was for Bingo. If Bobbie had only had sense enough to go and get in line, Bingo would have followed, cap and all. The line was rapidly disappearing, and poor Bobbie was still running in circles, undecided which way to go. I was doubled over with laughter, but had just about decided to go out and rescue him, when I saw Timmie break away from his line, run up to Bingo, grab the cap, fling it at Bobbie, and then kick at Bingo."

Mrs. Hunter frowned.

"Timmie *must* learn to control his temper."

"Well, I really didn't blame Timmie. He knew he'd get a black mark for coming in late, thanks to Bobbie and Bingo. And besides," Joyce smiled to herself, "he didn't touch Bingo, just kicked in his general direction. But Bingo tucked his tail between his legs and galloped for home. His day was

entirely spoiled. Timmie is so rarely cross at him."

At that moment Bobbie came dashing in.

"Are you, Joyce? Are you?"

"Am I what, Bobbie? Do use some sense."

"Are you going away?"

"Away?" Joyce frowned. "No. Where?"

"I don't know. Grandma Parsons said so. She said I'd better be nice to you. You'd be leaving next week."

Joyce turned to her mother.

"What ails him?" she asked.

Her mother was smiling mysteriously.

"Why don't you go ask Grandma Parsons what she's been telling Bobbie?"

Still mystified, Joyce wandered slowly across the yard towards the Parsons' house. Autumn colors were flaming around her, crimson and gold. It was just a year ago that Patricia had come to Westcott. What an exciting year it had been! Joyce sighed, as she thought of it. Well, this coming year was certainly going to be a dull one,—no Raoul, no Patricia.

It was a subdued girl that greeted Grandma Parsons.

"Hello, Grandma. Bobbie just came

rushing in, saying that you told him I was going away. I think the child has lost what little sense he had."

"Why, Joyce!" protested Grandma Parsons indignantly. "How can you talk so about Bobbie?"

"Oh, I realize that he is a great favorite with you and Mother, but—" Joyce began to tease.

"Besides," interrupted Grandma Parsons, "I did tell him that!"

"You did!" Joyce was amazed.

"I told him to go ask you about it. I thought that would bring you over." Grandma's eyes twinkled merrily.

Joyce looked at her speechless for a minute.

"Grandma Parsons! Have you lost your mind? I'm not going away!"

"Oh, yes, you are." Grandma's smiled broadened! "It's all settled."

Joyce sank limply to a chair and stared at her.

"Who? Where? What?"

Grandma Parsons laughed outright at the blank expression on Joyce's face.

"It's your own fault. You said you wished you were at school with Patricia."

“I did? When?” Joyce was completely bewildered.

“You said you’d help her fight her battle.”

“I would, of course,” said loyal Joyce.

“Well, you’re going to!”

“I am! No! Grandma Parsons! In New York? Oh, it’s too good to be true!”

Joyce’s voice was elated, but she was still too dazed to believe her good fortune.

“But it is true,” Grandma assured her.

“But, Grandma Parsons, the money? And Mother and Dad—?”

“Your mother and father have Irma, Timmie, and Bobbie.”

“And Bingo,” added Joyce, whimsically.

“To say nothing of Grandfather Parsons and myself. As to the money, a Joyce scholarship has been established, never mind by whom, as a reward for certain assistance given by her last winter—”

“Grandma Parsons, I didn’t do a thing!”

“Don’t interrupt. It is very rude in young girls. This scholarship will take care of all travelling and school expenses, but not clothes.”

“Who cares?” Joyce jumped to her feet, grabbed Grandma Parsons around the waist,

and started a mad dance. "I've my new blue serge, and my last winter's coat, to say nothing of the little tan silk. Who cares for clothes, anyway? I'm going to see Ray and Patricia."

"Joyce! Joyce!" panted Grandma Parsons. "Stop it!"

Joyce gave her an extra hug before she let her go.

"It's all your doings, Grandma. I don't see how you ever managed Mother and Dad."

"I don't quite see, myself," said Grandma Parsons, a bit severely, "but the point is, I did manage them. Now, shall I write Patricia or will you?"

Joyce hesitated a minute. It would be a real thrill to have that news to write, but, no doubt, Grandma Parsons would enjoy doing it, too.

"You do it," said Joyce, finally. "I've a million things to attend to."

Singing gayly, she dashed from the house, like a young whirlwind, slamming doors carelessly behind her.

CHAPTER IV

RAY'S VISIT

PATRICIA let Grandma Parsons' letter drop slowly from her hand. Joyce was coming to Miss Brent's school! Joyce! Patricia sighed. Joyce was a dear, and Patricia was fond of her, but wouldn't her presence at Miss Brent's complicate the situation rather than ease it? And yet, she was glad, for Joyce, and for Ray.

Still pondering, Patricia went to her room to rest, bathe, and dress for dinner. Dinner in the country was quite frequently informal, but her father had said he was bringing out two guests. Moreover, this was the weekend, and almost any one might drop in for the evening.

While Patricia was resting, a book in hand, her mother came in smiling.

"I see you had a letter from Grandma Parsons," she said.

"Yes," answered Patricia, in a non-committal way.

"What do you think of her plan?" asked Mrs. Strickland.

“Oh! Then you know of it?” said Patricia slowly.

“Grandma Parsons has wired us a number of times, asking advice.”

“It will be nice for Joyce,” said Patricia.

“And for you,” added her mother. “Your father and I will have to leave for England some time before Christmas. We shall want you at home for a while; after that you are to go to Miss Brent’s to board. Joyce will be your room-mate.”

Patricia looked very thoughtful.

“I don’t know, Mother. I honestly don’t know whether Joyce will be happy at Miss Brent’s or not.”

“Joyce is a real person,” said Mrs. Strickland. “She will get along anywhere, and I’m sure she will make many friends.”

“Yes, Joyce is a dear, and I’m very fond of her,” said Patricia, “but the girls there can be so horrid, and they won’t understand or appreciate Joyce. I didn’t at first, myself.”

Patricia flushed rather uncomfortably.

Mrs. Strickland considered.

“I feel sure,” she said finally, “that Joyce will come out all right. She may have some lessons to learn, but she is the kind of girl who

eventually wins her way, anywhere. I think you will find, in the long run, that Grandma Parsons' advice is sound—as usual.”

“I hope so,” said Patricia.

She was still feeling a little doubtful in her own heart when she descended to dinner. The dining-room looked so restful and lovely, with the tall candles lighted and the flowers and silver so beautifully arranged. Patricia was glad just then that even the formal dinners out here in the country were really not formal at all.

“How many for dinner to-night, Galter?” she asked the butler.

“Only six, Miss.”

“Including ourselves?” Patricia was surprised. Saturday night, guests were frequent.

“Yes, Miss Patricia. Your father came in a while back with Mr. Burton and Mr. Gail. I didn't know the young gentleman.”

“Young gentleman?” Patricia frowned. “Oh, well, no matter!”

She wandered out into the garden. In spite of the lateness of the season, the garden was beautiful. A few hollyhocks still stood, stiff and straight; all the fall flowers were abloom, asters and dahlias. Patricia wandered about,

touched by the lovely peace of the place, bending to a flower here and there. There was to be a dance at the Howlands' that evening, and Patricia was still undecided whether or not she would go.

"Just a few of Marion's friends, in for the evening," Mrs. Howland had said to Mrs. Strickland that morning over the telephone. "Of course we'll expect Patricia and any of your guests that care to come."

"I shall tell Patricia," Mrs. Strickland had answered graciously, but in her heart she wondered whether or not Patricia would go.

Patricia was still struggling with the question herself when she heard footsteps behind her. She turned slowly, a veritable picture there in the lovely autumn garden, her tawny hair enhanced by the silver sheen of her dinner-gown.

"Why, Ray!" she cried in joyous welcome. "What a surprise!"

"I'm glad to see you, Patricia!"

"You seem to have grown a foot since you came to New York," said Patricia with a little smile.

Indeed, Raoul did look taller, older, some-

thing subtle in his dress and manner giving him a dignity new to his boyishness.

"My goodness!" Ray smiled his big wholesome smile. "I had to expand in some way to match the city."

"You were the one Galter meant!"

"Galter?" said Ray, with a frown.

"The butler. I asked him how many were in for dinner, and he spoke of a young gentleman."

"Patricia," said Raoul earnestly, "my knees are absolutely knocking together. Do I have to eat dinner under the observant eyes of a butler? I'll be scared to death."

Patricia laughed gayly.

"Galter's an old dear. He's been in the family for years. You needn't be a bit afraid of him. He'll take awfully good care of you."

"Too good," said Ray, in a mock-mournful voice.

"Well, of course, you can have your meal in the nursery if you prefer," Patricia giggled.

"I feel as though that is where I belong," said Ray as they turned back toward the house.

But the meal went off without any mishap, despite Raoul's misgivings. He and Patricia

had many things to chat about on the side; and Mr. Gail was one of the head men of the company for which Raoul worked. He asked a great many questions, and Raoul answered them in his straightforward manner, although more than once he was forced to admit, "I really don't know, sir. I still have a great deal to learn about my job, and the city, too."

"Well," Mrs. Strickland asked Patricia as as they rose from the table, "do you think you will go over to the Howlands' this evening?"

Patricia turned to Raoul.

"What do you think? Would you care to go?"

"What is it?" asked Raoul. "Just one of the neighbors?"

Patricia smiled.

"Yes," she said, "just one of the neighbors. Marion Howland is having a few in for the evening. I think perhaps they'll dance."

"Why, yes," said Raoul, "I'd like to go."

The Howlands had a beautiful home. One of its special attractions was the outdoor dancing pavilion. There were several girls in light dresses, young men in informal evening wear.

“Oh,” gasped Ray, looking down at his plain suit. “I thought this was just a few of the neighbors.”

“That’s all it is,” Patricia laughed. “Really there aren’t as many there as you might think.”

“Looks like about a million to me,” said Raoul.

Patricia was acclaimed by several of the young people, for, despite her disagreement with her own particular friends, she was still a general favorite, and much of a leader. Ray, too, was surrounded, and though slightly ill at ease, his big cheery smile soon drew many glances to himself.

It was while he was dancing with Marion Howland that Roy Walker cut in on him. Patricia, standing at one side of the room, chatting with two or three other girls, noticed this, noticed that Ray was discomfited, ill at ease; noticed, too, Roy Walker’s ease of manner, the perfection of his clothes, and the hint of a sneer in his smile as he bent to say something to Marion. Furious, Patricia turned and walked out into the chill of the evening. Why did Raoul need to show up so poorly? He was really splendid. But he did look

gawky beside Roy Walker. Patricia stamped her foot. She detested Roy Walker, and yet she could not force herself to go to Ray and put him at his ease.

She was standing there quietly, gazing up into the starry sky, when she heard a faint cry. On the Howland estate there was a natural lake. This lake was not very large. Patricia had swum across it many times, but in some spots it was very deep. The cry seemed to come from that direction, and it was a cry of distress. Patricia hesitated. Should she run down and see what had happened, or should she take time to summon some of the others? Just then there was a lull in the music behind her, and again that call for help could be heard. It was still faint, but unmistakably from the direction of the lake. Patricia stepped back into the pavilion.

"Oh, Marion," she called, her voice raised a trifle in excitement.

Marion paused and looked coolly over her shoulder at Patricia. Roy Walker, too, looked at Patricia rather eagerly. Several others had stopped talking and glanced her way; Raoul alone sensed something wrong and started in her direction.

“Well?” asked Marion, raising her eyebrows.

“There is some trouble out here—on the lake. I hear some one calling.”

Marion looked at Roy Walker. He shrugged his shoulders as he said distinctly: “Want me to play the little Boy Hero? Shall I go rescue this supposed damsel in distress?”

Marion giggled and turned away. But Ray Hunter, followed by several others, both boys and girls, had reached Patricia's side. Together they raced across the lawn in the direction of the lake. The calls were growing louder now, more insistent. Decidedly they were calls of distress.

“Help! Help! I'm drowning!”

“That sounds like Bobby,” gasped Patricia as she ran.

“Who?” asked Ray. “Marion's brother?”

“No—her sister.”

Undoubtedly the cries were from the lake, seemingly the middle of it. Without hesitation, Ray pulled off his shoes and coat and plunged into the icy water. Word had gone round that Bobby Howland was out in the middle of the lake, drowning. Two or three

of the boys went in search of a boat and possible light.

Marion came running up to Patricia, followed by Roy Walker.

"Is it—is it Bobby?" she gasped.

"It sounds like her," said Patricia. "Listen."

Very faintly now came that "Help! Help!"

"There's something queer about it," volunteered Roy Walker, but Marion was too frightened to listen to him.

"Oh, go after her, go after her!" she begged him.

"I—I don't swim very well," he protested.

"Ray is already out there," said Patricia proudly.

"Who?" asked Roy Walker. "Oh!" Then, turning to Marion, he asked, "Where are the boats?"

Marion was wringing her hands now.

"Oh, they've been put up for the winter. We're going in town soon. Bobby! Oh, Bobby!"

"Help!" came the answer, surprisingly strong and clear.

"It is Bobby. She's out there!" Marion was almost frantic.

“Keep still a minute,” commanded Patricia. Then, raising her voice, “Raoul! Oh, Raoul!”

“Yes,” came Ray’s voice in answer.

“Can you find her?”

“No!” answered Ray.

Without another word, Patricia kicked off her own dancing-slippers and plunged into the lake. Roy Walker, aghast, tried to stop her. He waded in to his arm-pits, but Patricia, with her splendid stroke, was soon in deep water. Bedraggled, shivering, Roy returned to Marion.

The group was silent now, listening for that cry of help. It could no longer be heard. And then, into the midst of the gathering strolled Bobby Howland!

“Bobby!” gasped Marion. “Then it wasn’t you!”

Bobby smiled mischievously.

“But it was!”

“Why,” chorused several; “why, it couldn’t have been. You’re not even wet.”

“Marion,” giggled Bobby, “I just learned a new trick to-day from Herman. I’ve discovered I’m really quite a ventriloquist.”

“Bobby Howland!!” exclaimed several voices.

“And I thought I would test it out to-night,” continued Bobby gayly,” since I was not allowed at the dance. A bit of diversion for me, as it were.”

“Do you realize,” said Marion severely, “that Patricia Strickland is out there, in her evening-gown, searching for you?”

Bobby's eyes grew large, her voice serious.

“No, oh, no!”

“Yes, oh, yes,” mimicked Roy Walker through chattering teeth.

Bobby pushed Marion aside.

“Patricia!” she cried wildly. “Patricia! Come back!”

There was no answer, only Raoul's voice, coming out of the darkness. “Coming!”

Then suddenly a new cry, in Patricia's voice, agonized, terrified.

“Ray! Oh, Ray! Help!”

“What's wrong, Patricia? Answer me!”

“I'm so cold! Oh, help!”

With frantic strokes Ray raced for Patricia. Fortunately, he was near her, could see her bronze head in the dim starlight. And there was need for quick action. Patricia, warm from dancing, had contracted a sudden chill in the icy water and was barely able to keep

a float. Two or three other boys started to swim to her, but Ray was nearest. Luckily they were not far from shore, and in a few minutes Raoul was striding up the beach, carrying a limp and shivering Patricia.

Even in her misery, Patricia again noticed Raoul and Roy Walker; Ray, though wet, was upstanding, splendid, doing a man's work, while Roy Walker, shivering, bedraggled, looked what he really was. Patricia closed her eyes suddenly as another chill shook her.

"Quick," ordered Ray; "lead me to the house. Get blankets, hot water—call Mrs. Howland, and a doctor—"

He strode across the lawn, carrying Patricia.

"Who was that?" gasped Bobby Hunter.

"A friend of Patricia's, Raoul Hunter," some one told her.

"Oh," wailed Bobby; "and to think I might have been in Patricia's place. It's worth getting drowned for!"

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST DAY

PATRICIA'S chill had a prolonged effect. The Stricklands moved hurriedly back to town the following Monday, and for the next three weeks Patricia was ill with a congestion which threatened at any minute to become severe pneumonia.

Meanwhile, Joyce arrived gayly in New York.

She had left home with many misgivings. It is possible, had she not known that she would see Ray in New York, that she might even have weakened at the last minute.

"Mother, are you sure you'll be all right? Dad, I'll miss you so dreadfully! Bobbie and Timmie, kiss me again. And take good care of Bingo!"

Thus Joyce on the steps of the train talked fast and furiously, lest she weep. And, once settled in her berth, alone, it must be admitted that the tears did come. But not for long! Joyce was soon asleep!

The next morning, early, she was in the

hustle and confusion of Chicago. There was the excitement of changing from one depot to another, the hurried ride across town in a bus, the new depot, the crowds, the thrill of finding her right train, and the right place in that train. It was Joyce's first experience of being all alone in a big city, and she was having a thrilling time of it. Then another half day while the train sped through lovely autumn country, another night, and then she was in the Grand Central Station, eagerly scanning the crowd for a sight of Raoul's face!

When she did see Ray, she hardly recognized him for a minute. He had changed subtly, grown older, more mature.

"Why, Ray," she said, as she rushed to meet him, "whatever has happened to you?"

"To me?" asked Ray in surprise. "Why, nothing happened to me. It was Patricia!"

"Patricia!" Joyce stopped short and looked at him in alarm. "Was she hurt? Is she sick? What's the matter?"

"Yes, she's still ill. That's why I had to meet you alone." Ray explained hastily what had happened at the Howlands'. "So you'll have to go straight out to school. Mrs. Strickland was terribly sorry. She had planned

to have you come to the house for a few days, but the doctor has ordered absolute quiet for Patricia. And we are all afraid that the excitement of having you there, even in the house, would be bad for Patricia. You don't mind, do you, Joy?"

"No," answered Joyce, slowly, though her knees almost shook. "I—I guess I'll get along all right."

"I think you will, too," said Ray, heartily.

Joyce's heart sank when Ray left her, and she turned to enter Miss Brent's school alone. A smartly-dressed maid answered her ring. She looked Joyce over critically, and then presented a tray. Joyce looked at the tray blankly.

"I—I'm Joyce Hunter," she gasped. "I'm coming to school here. Didn't Mrs. Strickland tell you?"

At the mention of Mrs. Strickland's name, the expression on the maid's face changed.

"Come this way, please!"

Joyce followed, clutching her brand-new suit-case and feeling most uncomfortable. In the hall she passed two girls. Joyce smiled rather uncertainly, trying to be friendly. The girls returned the smile with a surprised stare.

"O dear!" thought Joyce. "I do wish—"



A SMARTLY-DRESSED MAID ANSWERED HER RING. — Page 54.

But before she knew what it was she wished, she was standing before a large desk, gazing straight into the eyes of Miss Brent. Miss Brent was a tall, very dignified woman with white hair.

“So this is Joyce Hunter!” Miss Brent smiled as she spoke.

“Yes’m.” Joyce could not remember that she had ever felt so shaky.

“Won’t you be seated?” asked Miss Brent.

“I—I’d rather stand,” gulped Joyce.

Miss Brent arose, nodded to the waiting maid to leave, took Joyce by the hand, and led her to a small settee near by.

“Now,” she seated herself and drew Joyce down beside her, “we are going to have a little chat, you and I. Mrs. Strickland has told me all about you. She was most regretful that she could not come here with you to-day, but I believe that Patricia had rather a bad night.”

“Oh, no!” said Joyce.

“Nothing about which to be alarmed, I understand; but, as you know, Mrs. Strickland is a devoted mother. She has asked me to make you happy and comfortable. We both realize that you will be a bit strange at first

among all these new girls. Now, if you wish, I will take you out and introduce you personally to some of these girls; but I feel that perhaps it will be wiser and better for you to form your own contacts, choose your own friends. However, it shall be as you wish."

Again she looked down at Joyce with one of her rare, charming smiles.

Joyce's heart had ceased fluttering painfully. She looked up at Miss Brent, her eyes shining with honesty.

"I like you," she said.

"And I like you, Joyce," Miss Brent returned gravely. "I feel sure you will win many friends here, but I am awaiting your decision."

Joyce took time to think, looking down at her dusty shoes. It would be much easier, of course, to have Miss Brent smooth the way for her. Still, if she had wanted to do so, she would not have asked Joyce's opinion first. Joyce looked up again."

"I think—I know when a new girl comes into school back home, we all admire her much more if she stands on her own feet, takes care of herself. Perhaps it's different here; and I'm a little frightened, it's all so

strange. But I guess, maybe, girls are the same everywhere, and I'll be happier in the long run if I make my own friends."

"Very well." Miss Brent arose and returned to her desk, where she pressed a button. "I will have Miss Hodges show you your room, introduce you to some of the girls in your corridor, and see that you are comfortably settled."

No word of commendation, not even a smile, but Joyce felt that she had won Miss Brent's approval, and a glow of satisfaction enveloped her from head to foot.

Miss Hodges was a dowdy little person, but very energetic, and very talkative.

"Come with me, my dear," she said to Joyce. "You have one of the loveliest rooms in the school," she chatted along as she and Joyce entered the elevator. "Patricia Strickland is to be your room-mate as soon as she is able to come back to school."

"Yes, I know," Joyce nodded.

"Too bad she is ill, but then I believe she did not intend to occupy a room here until her mother and father left for England."

"Yes—no—" said Joyce, but Miss Hodges chatted on, not heeding her.

“The two Misses Howland are to have the room adjoining yours. Ordinarily they do not stay with us, either; but Mrs. Howland is planning to open the Palm Beach house early this year. Moreover, Miss Roberta Howland is just entering here, and I understand that she is such a problem that her mother wishes her to be directly under our supervision.”

“Yes—no—” agreed Joyce. Her head was in a whirl. She had seen so much, had so many unusual emotions, these past few days that she felt bewildered, and even a little tired.

The room was indeed lovely, lovelier than anything Joyce had ever known. The wallpaper was light, and dainty draperies at the windows matched the design of it. Twin beds stood side by side, a small lamp on a table between them. Each girl had her own desk, her own dressing-table, her own clothes-closet. Through an open door Joyce caught a glimpse of shining tiles and a shower-bath.

“Oh,” said Joyce, as she sank into a luxurious chair, “How marvelous!”

“I am glad you like it,” said Miss Hodges primly. “I know you are tired, my dear, but really wouldn't it be a little kinder to remain standing while I am in the room?”

In a flash Joyce was on her feet, a deep flush staining her cheeks.

“I forgot!” she apologized.

“Miss Brent has absolutely no tolerance for the prevalent ill manners of the present generation. Kindly remember that while you are here.” Miss Hodges was a little brusque; then she added more kindly: “When you have refreshed yourself, come to my office. There are no classes to-day, but we are registering the girls and assigning their rooms. I will see that you meet some of the girls.”

She was gone, closing the door gently after her. Joyce threw herself across the bed, fighting back the tears that would come.

“Oh, I hate it here. I just know I’ll hate it. I like Miss Brent, but—I didn’t mean to be rude! I wish I had stayed home! I’m going to be terribly lonesome. Oh, I hate it here!”

“Ha! A fellow-sufferer!” said a soft voice in her ear.

Joyce looked up, startled. Before her was a girl of not more than fourteen years, possibly younger. Joyce saw in a glance that this girl belonged to this strange new world. Her clothes, her manner, the way her hair was

cut, all bespoke sophistication; but about her eyes and mouth was an expression of open rebellion.

Joyce nodded dumbly. She knew she looked a fright. Her eyes were red, her hair and dress were both mussed. Nevertheless, Miss Hodges' rebuke still stung, and she struggled to rise.

"Sit still; sit still," said the younger girl, curling herself up at the foot of the other bed. "I was just on my way out. I heard your moans and lamentations. I felt that way, too, and paused to sympathize."

"That was nice," said Joyce.

"What's wrong? Hodge-Podge stick a pin in you?"

"Hodge-Podge?" asked Joyce.

"Miss Hodges. Haven't you heard her nick-name yet? You *are* new!"

"Painfully new," admitted Joyce, some of her natural humor returning. The other girl looked at her in pleased surprise.

"You'll do, in spite of your—never mind. I think I'm going to like you. I *know* I'm going to like you."

"You're quite frank about it," said Joyce.

"I am so, both by nature and training.

Do you like dogs?" She switched the conversation abruptly.

"Oh, I love them," said Joyce enthusiastically; "horses, too. My father keeps a livery stable."

The younger girl raised her eyebrows.

"Oh, I *know* I'm going to like you. Tidy up a bit, and I'll take you down and help you register. I've half an hour to spare."

Eagerly Joyce accepted the invitation. She considered changing into her blue-serge dress, but she decided that her travelling dress was newer, and, although badly mussed, would probably do for this first day. As usual, Joyce was not bothering greatly about clothes.

Miss Hodges' office was filled with girls; some stood in groups chatting, others ran in and out, several glanced up curiously as Joyce entered with her new friend. She was uncomfortably conscious that she was the subject of much subdued conversation. It was well for her that she could not hear the unkind remarks.

"How did *she* get in here?"

"She looks like a serving-maid."

"None of our serving-maids are ever so untidy as that!"

This last produced a suppressed giggle. Joyce felt herself blush slowly; her companion glowered in the general direction of the giggle, but just at that minute Miss Hodges looked up. She smiled and nodded at Joyce's companion, and then turned to Joyce.

"I see you have already met your next-door neighbor. Now, if you will answer just a few questions, we will know where to place you. You have been attending a public school, have you not?"

"Yes, ma'am. Westcott High School. I'm a senior."

"Yes, yes. Any languages?"

"French, mostly."

Without raising her eyes, Miss Hodges asked a question rapidly in French. Much to her own satisfaction, Joyce was able to answer almost as rapidly. Miss Hodges made a mark on the paper before her.

"Mathematics? Sciences? Arts and Crafts? Home Management? Management of Estates? Appreciation of Art? Music? Ethics?" She rattled these off so glibly and rapidly that Joyce blinked. Miss Hodges looked up at the girl's silence. Then she gave her the paper.

"Just fill 'out which of these you have had,

and the approximate grade attained. I suppose your credentials will arrive in a day or two; meanwhile I should like to classify you and have you register." She turned. "Now, Miss Morton," she motioned to a very pretty girl who waited at her left.

Joyce stood, dumbly gazing at the paper which Miss Hodges had thrust into her hand. Only about every third item had any meaning whatsoever for her. She was bursting with questions that she *must* ask. How could she fill out the blank adequately unless she knew what the items meant? She came out of her trance at an easy touch on her arm.

"Come along," said her guardian; "let's get out of here."

"But I must answer these questions," protested Joyce. Again she was aware that a covert smile passed among several of the girls standing about.

Her companion had not waited for an answer. She had turned on her heel and started out. Not knowing what else to do, Joyce followed her. They sought a small room near by, which Joyce was to learn was one of several where the girls entertained callers, or joined in informal groups, or used

merely as lounging-rooms when alone. Although Joyce did not appreciate fully the taste displayed nor the value of the furniture, she did realize that the room was charming.

"Do we—can we—go in here for this?" She hesitated in the doorway.

"Of course! Why not?" The other girl threw herself carelessly into a chair.

"It seems too nice," said Joyce.

Nevertheless she seated herself, still clutching the paper Miss Hodges had given her.

"Too nice!" hooted the other girl. "Better not let any of those snips in there hear you say that."

"They—they were rather snippy, weren't they?" Joyce felt the slow blush beginning again. "I—I think they were saying things about me."

"Don't let that bother you! Empty-heads! They don't know anything but clothes—and beaux!" Contempt was evident in the other girl's tones.

"But you've been terribly nice to me," said Joyce gratefully. Then she looked startled. "And I don't even know your name."

"Fifty-fifty," chuckled the younger girl. "I don't know yours, either."

“Me? Oh, I’m Joyce Hunter.”

“Joyce Hunter!” The other girl sat suddenly erect. “Is that Raoul Hunter your brother?”

“Yes,” said Joyce eagerly. “Do you know him?”

“Not exactly; we’ve never—that is, I suppose I do, really. He was the one who rescued Patricia out of our pond. And it was all my fault really—”

“Oh, you’re Bobby Howland!” said Joyce suddenly.

“Absolutely! And your brother is a duck.”

“That sounds almost like a pun,” said Joyce with a giggle, “especially under the circumstances.”

“Take it or leave it,” said Bobby flippantly.

“You know you’re quite different from what I thought you’d be. I’ve heard you were a terrible tomboy—and—and—a case. Miss Hodges said—”

“Oh, plague Miss Hodges!”

“But you aren’t, a bit. You’re quite the nicest person I’ve ever met. Oh, I do hope we can be friends!” said Joyce fervently.

“So you think I’m not a tomboy nor a

harum-scarum?" There was a queer look on Bobby's face.

"Oh, no, not a bit. I'm that sort of person, but you—Why, you're so thoughtful, and then look at your beautiful clothes!"

Bobby laughed.

"Wait until you see my menagerie. And do let's get back to that paper. My half-hour is nearly gone."

Dinner was another very trying time for Joyce. She was very self-conscious, and she felt certain that her table-manners would be criticized by these girls. Then, also, they were for the most part in light dresses, and Joyce still wore her mussed travelling dress. She was most uncomfortable.

There were seven girls and one teacher at each table. It was the teacher's duty to preside, to see that the girls knew one another, and to keep the conversation general. Unfortunately, the teacher at whose table Joyce was placed this first evening, was a very meek, subdued person, who taught Appreciation of Art. Two of the girls were Old Girls who had been at Miss Brent's the previous year. They were well aware of Miss Keating's failing, and proceeded to manage affairs

in their own way. Two of the new girls were their friends, and the four of them proceeded to chat and giggle among themselves, entirely effacing Joyce and the two remaining girls at the table. Miss Keating made one or two ineffectual attempts to straighten matters out, and then subsided. Joyce continued to eat her meal in silence, glancing now and then at her fellow-sufferers, but receiving no sympathetic glance in return.

Suddenly one of the Old Girls, whose name was Frances Evans, broke into French.

“Isn’t she a fright?” she asked of the other Old Girl.

Joyce was well aware who was meant. Anger, a rare thing with her, flared in her heart, dyed her cheeks. Scarcely realizing what she was doing, Joyce looked straight at the girl who had spoken, and said in her perfect French, “Will you pass me the rolls, if you please?”

Joyce at least had the satisfaction of seeing Frances Evans blush uncomfortably and drop her eyes. Frances made no move to pass the rolls, and Joyce discovered during the ensuing silence that the plate of rolls was directly in front of her.

When at last Joyce tumbled into bed, very weary, more than a little homesick, a wee bit blue, another terrible realization came to her.

“Oh,” she groaned to herself, “I’ve been in New York a whole day, and I haven’t even telephoned Mrs. Strickland to ask how Patricia is. I am utterly hopeless!”

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOL STARTS

JOYCE'S sunny good nature quickly reasserted itself. She arose the next morning, donned a fresh, immaculate dress, singing as she did so. She laughed as she thought of Sally Orcutt and her superstitions.

"Dear Sally," said Joyce aloud. "I must write her. Won't she be surprised to learn that I am in New York? And the very first thing I must do after breakfast is to telephone and inquire about Patricia."

But it was a great deal more than half an hour after breakfast was finished before Joyce found time to telephone about Patricia. Directly after the meal, mail was distributed. The girls eagerly surrounded the teacher who had charge of this, for while all the day pupils and a few of the boarders were really New York girls, still a great many of Miss Brent's pupils came from out of town. And, needless to say, there was already more than one girl who had felt a touch of homesickness.

Joyce expected no mail, but she joined the

eager crowd. There was a great deal of chatter, and Joyce was included in it. Happily she responded. And, to her great surprise, there were two letters for her. Eagerly she opened them. One was a note from Raoul, telling her he would telephone her later in the day, giving her a warning to expect a call at a certain hour. The other letter, much to Joyce's surprise, was from Grandma Parsons. Although this second epistle contained no great amount of news, Joyce welcomed it.

"Isn't that just like Grandma Parsons?" she thought to herself. "She knew I'd probably be homesick. And how good a letter from home does look, even though it left Westcott the same day as I did."

As soon as her letters were read, Joyce rushed to her room. This must be aired and straightened, although she had been informed that a maid would be in later to make her bed.

While Joyce was still straightening, a gong resounded through the building, and she paused, wondering what it meant. There was a tap on her door, and Bobby Howland's head appeared, peering in.

"Good morning, Merry Sunshine," she

greeted. "How did you wake so soon? I missed breakfast, which was quite all right with me. Reducing is the proper gesture nowadays."

"My gracious!" said Joyce. "You don't need to reduce."

Bobby opened the door and entered.

"That's Miss Brent's idea in general concerning us all. It's a serious misdemeanor to miss breakfast. However, the first day or two no one is ever very strict. But do come along, old thing. Didn't you hear the gong?"

"Yes, I heard it. What does it mean?"

"That gong is the most pestiferous thing in this whole building. It says 'Get up,' and we arise; it says 'Go to bed,' and we retire, presumably. It says 'Come,' and we come; 'Go,' and we go. Before the end of the term you have become either an automaton or a raving maniac."

Joyce laughed.

"I haven't learned the language of bells yet. What did it say just now?"

"I shall translate," said Bobby, striking an attitude. "Little friend, the gong just said, 'Come ye! Come ye! To the general

Assembly Hall. Come ye all! And if you be found on the stairs or loitering in the hall, or, worst of all, in your room, when I again speak in five minutes or less, I'll gobble you up!"

"My gracious!" Joyce started for the door. "Those five minutes must be nearly gone. Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"Oh, well," Bobby followed her nonchalantly down the hall, "no one is very strict the first few days. Besides, it doesn't pay to be too prompt. You acquire a reputation for punctuality or obedience, and then you must either live up to your reputation or lose your self-respect."

"How old did you say you were?" exclaimed Joyce, as they entered the elevator.

Bobby raised her eyebrows.

"I haven't said, but I shall be glad to. Do you wish information concerning my years, my experience, my feelings, or my knowledge?"

"I meant years," said Joyce.

"Oh, as to that, not yet fifteen; otherwise, I'm as old as Methuselah."

Before Joyce had time to reply to this, the second gong sounded.

"O my!" she said, in a flurry, as she

stepped out of the elevator. "Which way do we go?"

Bobby was at any rate still young enough to giggle.

"Come on. This way. And don't be so alarmed. No one is going to behead you."

Bobby and Joyce, with several other late-comers, slipped into seats, which were really very comfortable chairs, at the rear of a large room. Miss Hodges was in charge of this room, and Joyce looked at her carefully. She was a plain little woman, round as a butter-ball. Her dress, of some dark material, was of a style ten years past. Her face was round and brown. Joyce wondered what there could be in the personality of this queer little woman that she should be next in charge to Miss Brent. For Miss Brent, Joyce felt the most profound admiration, an admiration which was to grow throughout the year; but for Miss Hodges her feelings were mixed. Certainly she could not admire her, and yet she had to admit that undoubtedly the woman had great capability. Joyce felt that this teacher somehow lacked the larger understanding of girls which was Miss Brent's. She was speaking now, and

Joyce paid strict attention. There was so much to be learned that she felt she must not miss one iota. Several of the other girls were not nearly so attentive.

“First of all,” said Miss Hodges, “I will announce something pleasant. You know I always like to coat the pill with sugar, although I feel, and I am sure that many of you girls feel, also, that classes here at Miss Brent’s require no sugar-coating.”

She gave them a funny little smile, and Joyce could not decide whether she was being really clever, or just silly.

“The pleasant affair is the reception for the New Girls, on Friday evening.”

There was subdued hand-clapping.

“Oh,” said Joyce, half audibly, “Patricia will have to miss it!”

Several girls near turned and stared at her. Joyce sank into an embarrassed silence, and was angry with herself as she felt a blush rising to her face. Nevertheless, she held her head high and pretended to listen to Miss Hodges as she mentioned time and place and began naming the acting committees, girls who were to meet with her directly after Assembly.

“And now,” went on Miss Hodges, “in regard to classes: I think most of the schedules have been well filled out and attended to, with perhaps one or two exceptions. I advise every girl to have typewritten, or filled out in some manner, her hour list, with schedule of classes. Put this on the back of your door. Then there will be no excuse for tardiness or absence, even these first days.”

Bobby Howland made a grimace behind her hand.

“To-morrow we shall begin our regular schedule, and each pupil must be in her appointed class at the appointed time. For the sake of all newcomers, let me announce that a warning gong sounds throughout the buildings before each class. Five minutes later, another gong is rung. Any one appearing in class after this second gong is given a tardy mark. And again, for the sake of the new girls, let me announce that Miss Brent is very strict concerning tardiness. There is no real reason why each girl cannot be in her class at the proper time. In case of illness, of course, there is an excuse; but if a girl is ill enough to be tardy, she is ill enough to be sent to the infirmary.”

Joyce looked about her. Carelessness about time was one of her own faults, and she made a firm resolve always to be on the dot here at Miss Brent's. The girls about her were looking and acting bored. A few were idly examining their finger-nails, pushing back the cuticle, or polishing them on the palm of the opposite hand; others were gazing out the window or toward the door. Bobby Howland was giving Miss Hodges respectful attention, but Joyce could see it was an effort. After a few short announcements, regarding the use of the tennis-courts, the penalty for missing gymnasium work, the use of the swimming-pool, and the necessity of signing up beforehand for riding-horses, Assembly was dismissed.

"One moment," Miss Hodges' clear voice rose over the murmur of conversation as the girls filed out. "I neglected to read the names of five girls whom I wish to see in my office at once."

There was a pause, conversation died away, and in the silence the five names sounded startlingly clear. Joyce was the first on the list, and again, to her own disgust, she felt herself blushing.

“That is all,” said Miss Hodges. Again talk was resumed.

“What do you suppose she wants with me?” Joyce whispered to Bobby Howland.

“I can’t imagine. Probably a conflict in your schedule,” Bobby replied hurriedly, and ran ahead a few steps to speak in a low tone to a very pretty older girl.

Joyce turned away, unreasonably hurt at Bobby’s abrupt answer. It wasn’t going to be too easy, life here at this school. Joyce half wished she had allowed Miss Brent to take her in charge. But suddenly she threw back her head. Maybe these girls were wealthier, better dressed, better educated than she was, but she was not going to be hurt by them. What they had of merit, she would acquire. She and Patricia and Mary Taintor had become firm friends, and both those girls were leaders here. Maybe she was from the country, maybe she didn’t know much, but she would learn! And she would not allow herself to be so easily hurt, only this Bobby Howland had seemed so friendly, and—

Her thoughts were interrupted by a touch on her elbow, and Bobby's mirthful face grinning into hers.

"My gracious! You are in a hurry. I nearly lost you." Joyce was to learn that Bobby never apologized for anything she ever did. "I know it is a bit previous, but under the circumstances—Patricia ill and all—"

"What are you talking about?" Joyce looked at her with a puzzled frown.

Bobby's smile was roguish. It changed the whole contour of her face, giving her the look of a mischievous small boy.

"I am about as clear as mud, I'll admit. What I've been trying to say is: Would you care to come to us for the week-end?"

Joyce's face was radiant.

"Oh, I'd love it—if you'd care to have me."

"Wouldn't have asked you else. We're still in the country. Don't mind, do you?"

"Oh, I love the country," said Joyce.

"All right. I'll tell Marion. She's driving out to-night. Ordinarily, one or two extra isn't even noticed, but Mother rather wanted to know—"

Bobby was off again down the hall, trailing her words after her.

Joyce went on, quaking a little in the knees, to Miss Hodges' office. She was elated over Bobby's invitation, and possibly might have been more so, had she known how much several of the girls in the school would have valued a similar one to the Howland home, and yet she was frightened a little, too. But she was more concerned over this coming interview with Miss Hodges. What could it mean?

The interview was not serious. Joyce had two conflicts in her schedule that needed straightening out. Moreover, she had not signed for any riding-hour.

"Don't you care to ride?" asked Miss Hodges.

"Oh, I love it!" Joyce was enthusiastic.

"Then how does it happen that it is not on your schedule? You know Miss Brent's prides itself on the splendid horsemanship of its girls." Miss Hodges raised her eyebrows.

Joyce glanced quickly at the four other girls awaiting their turns, and then dropped her gaze to the floor.

"I guess—I thought perhaps—it might be too expensive!" she blurted out.

Miss Hodges screwed her mouth up into a queer little twist.

“That needn't bother you specially, need it?”

Joyce was miserable.

“No, I suppose not, only I didn't like—” she hesitated.

There was a pause.

“Well,” said Miss Hodges, finally, “I shall list you for Tuesdays and Thursdays at four-thirty, with a possible hour on Saturday morning. That is satisfactory, is it not?”

“Quite,” said Joyce and fled.

She did not go far before she heard her name called.

“Miss Hunter. Miss Joyce Hunter. You're wanted on the 'phone.”

Joyce's heart almost stopped beating for a minute. What could it be? Then she remembered.

“Oh, it's Ray, of course, I didn't have any idea so much of the morning had gone.”

She ran eagerly to the telephone-booth, which was situated in the school's business office.

“Hello, Joy,” came Ray's cheery voice over the wire. “How's the world treating you?”

“Oh, just wonderfully, Ray. I know I’m going to love it here. I’ve met several of the girls already.”

“Good work! Have you heard from Patricia?”

“No!” exclaimed Joyce ruefully. “Isn’t that terrible? I’m going to call her as soon as I finish talking to you.”

“I just had a letter from home,” said Ray. “Every one is fine. I thought I’d better call you early this morning because I’ve got to go over to Trenton, and possibly down to Philadelphia.”

“Oh, Ray!” wailed Joyce, suddenly and unexpectedly homesick.

Ray laughed.

“Neither place is very far. Don’t lose your nerve, Sis. I’ll be back Saturday, and we’ll have a big jamboree,—a matinee, if they’ll let you, and dinner, or anything you say.”

“Lovely!” said Joyce, her spirits soaring again.

“All right. Keep a stiff upper lip until Saturday. I must go now, Joy, I’m in a rush.”

“Good-bye,” said Joyce.

No sooner had she replaced the receiver with a little click than she recalled Bobby's invitation.

"O my goodness!" she gasped. "Now what shall I do? I can't disappoint Ray, and I can't reach him. I don't even know where he 'phoned from. Well," she sighed, "I'll just have to tell Bobby Howland I can't come. And I did so want to go. I'll go tell her at once."

As she turned from the phone, she remembered Patricia.

"I'm going to call Mrs. Strickland right here and now. It's disgraceful that I haven't done it sooner."

Joyce had her troubles on this first call. She did not know the Stricklands' number, and it took several minutes to find the correct name in the bulky telephone directory, accustomed as she was to a book containing half a dozen pages. The call, when finally she did find it, was most peculiar looking. Instead of being 243-J, as Grandma Parsons' was, it had first an abbreviation which she could not read, and then 1883. Joyce hesitated a moment and then left the booth and walked up to a girl seated at the office desk.

“What call is this?” asked Joyce, pointing to the abbreviation.

The girl raised supercilious eyebrows.

“Mawningside-1883,” she replied.

“What?” gasped Joyce.

“Mawningside-1883,” repeated the girl.

Joyce looked from the girl to the book and back to the girl again.

“Oh,” she said, a great light dawning on her. “Morningside!”

“That’s what I said,” answered the girl.

Joyce returned to the booth and gave her number.

“Drop a nickel,” came the reply.

“O gracious!” exclaimed Joyce, “I have no money.”

“Drop a nickel,” repeated Central automatically.

Joyce hung up the receiver and went in search of five cents. Once again she returned, and again she gave her number. This time she was answered by a peculiar buzzing sound.

“Now what is wrong?” worried Joyce, who was by this time very hot and uncomfortable.

“Your number is busy,” Central finally deigned to inform her.

After a long wait, Joyce talked to Mrs.

Strickland. She apologized profusely for not having called sooner, and Mrs. Strickland, a very busy woman herself, appreciated the whirl into which the girl had fallen. She told her that Patricia was improving rapidly.

"I think in another week, or two weeks at the most, she will be able to be in school again. She has decided to come as a boarder as soon as she is able to come at all. Her condition is no longer serious, but she is very nervous, and, for Patricia, irritable."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Joyce.

"I know you will forgive her, Joyce, if she is a bit difficult at first."

"Of course," said Joyce.

"I'll try to see you soon. I was so sorry I was unable to meet you yesterday. And I hope very soon to be able to have you with us for lunch, at least."

"Don't worry about me," protested Joyce. "I'm getting along splendidly."

"I knew you would be," said Mrs. Strickland. "Have you met many of the girls?"

"Principally Bobby Howland," said Joyce.

"Bobby is a dear." Joyce could almost see Mrs. Strickland's smile. "She'll take good care of you."

“She has done so already,” said Joyce, “but I’ll be mighty glad to see Patricia.”

“And now that’s done,” she said aloud to herself as she turned from the telephone. “The very next thing I do must is to find Bobby Howland and explain about Saturday.”

She found Bobby again talking to the pretty older girl, evidently arguing with her.

“You’ve never met Marion, have you?” Bobby asked Joyce.

“No,” said Joyce.

“My sister,” Bobby explained.

The older girl smiled rather faintly at Joyce.

“Bobby tells me she has asked you for the week-end,” said Marion politely.

“Yes,” acknowledged Joyce, “and I’ve just discovered that I can’t go.”

“Why?” Bobby whirled on her.

Joyce explained the situation concerning Raoul.

“Raoul! Ray Hunter?” exclaimed Marion.

“That gorgeous brother of yours,” exclaimed Bobby. “Lovely! What could be sweeter! Just bring him along!”

“But your mother—” began Joyce.

“Mother won’t mind. We’ll stage a dance

or a sailing party, or something! He must come. Do bring him, Joyce." Bobby was enthusiastic.

"Yes, do." Marion was much more cordial than she had been a few minutes earlier.

CHAPTER VII

SAILING

THE next few days were extremely busy ones for Joyce, settling her belongings, getting acquainted with the girls, trying to remember her schedule without running back to her room between classes to consult her written slip, learning where the different classes were held, the name of each new teacher. Joyce was a busy girl indeed, but she found time each day to call up the Strickland residence and to inquire for Patricia; and each day the report was more encouraging.

Friday evening rolled around before Joyce was aware that Wednesday had departed.

“Will you tell me,” she asked Bobby Howland,, “what became of Thursday?”

“You should know,” Bobby teased her. “Which horse did you like the best?”

Joyce blushed and then giggled.

“I never did anything so dumb in my life. Yes, I did, too, last summer at camp, only then it wasn't really my fault and yesterday it was.”

“Tell me about it,” begged Bobby.

“Nothing to tell. Last summer my horse shied when I wasn't looking, but yesterday I just naturally tumbled off, although my stirrups were a bit too long,” added Joyce.

“The poor groom!” Bobby was shouting with laughter. “I never laughed so hard in all my life as I did at that groom trying to catch the beast that dropped you. Poor Thorpe! Serves him right, though. He should have told you that Thunder always likes to lead the procession. Marion warned me. That's why I took that old plug Aladdin. How was the groom's horse?”

“He was all right,” said Joyce with a wry face. “I was sorry the groom had to walk in, but that Thunder was such a beautiful horse, and I was so sure I could manage him!”

“You wouldn't have had a bit of trouble if you had let him go up ahead.”

“I rather thought that was what he wanted,” said Joyce.

Bobby Howland was astonished.

“Then why did you hold him back?”

Joyce blushed.

“That Frances Evans was up there.”

“I see!” exclaimed Bobby.

“I certainly was rewarded for being afraid.

I made a regular laughing-stock of myself for those girls."

Bobby Howland tossed her head.

"I never did like Fran Evans. She hasn't any sense. And since she made Turk's Head—"

"Turk's Head!" interrupted Joyce. "What's that?"

"Nothing!" said Bobby shortly. "And Fran Evans is a dyed-in-the-wool snob!"

"Something like Helen Trowbridge."

"Who?" ejaculated Bobby.

"One of the girls in camp last summer," explained Joyce. "She tried to be haughty with Patricia."

"What! Did she succeed?"

"Not exactly," said Joyce dryly.

"Tell me about it," begged Bobby Howland. "Oh, no, you won't have time now. There goes that old gong!"

"Do we go to parties by gong?" asked Joyce surprised.

"My dear, we go to classes, to food, to bed, to pleasures, and pains, all by gong and on time. I tell you, by spring you'll be a raving maniac if you pay attention to it. I must rush. I'll pop in for you on my way down."

She was gone, and Joyce hurried into her one and only evening dress. It was really a very pretty little gown, and Joyce, standing before the long mirror, felt reassured. But when she and Bobby appeared in the hall where the reception was being held, that assurance left her abruptly.

The hall was in reality the gymnasium, but it had been cleverly decorated and made an attractive room. Large white and maroon chrysanthemums filled all the corners. Greenery was everywhere. The "old girls" had even taken hold with a will, and an orchestra was playing softly. The lights had been successfully dimmed, and the place was indeed a fairyland.

Joyce gasped as she looked around, and the consciousness of her pretty dress faded from her, for on every side were frocks so much lovelier than hers that she felt almost tawdry. For an instant, she considered rushing back to her room and hiding from sight. She was prevented from obeying this impulse by a tug at her wrist.

"Come on," said Bobby. "Don't stand gaping like that. The line is over here."

Joyce looked at her in bewilderment. Re-

ceptions in Westcott were few and far between, and the reference to a "line" met an absolutely blank response in Joyce's mind. Nevertheless, she followed Bobby obediently and shook hands with Miss Brent and Miss Hodges.

"Good evening, Joyce" Miss Brent smiled at her. "We're so sorry Patricia is not with us this evening."

"So am I," answered Joyce honestly, beaming to think that Miss Brent recognized her amid so many girls.

Miss Hodges hurried her along, with a polite, indifferent manner, to the girl standing next in line. Joyce hesitated before she put out her hand, for the girl was Frances Evans.

"Oh, good evening! We're so glad you're here." Frances Evans was effusive, standing as she did, directly under the eyes of Miss Hodges.

Joyce looked at her in astonishment which was so great that she forgot to reply. Frances Evans pushed her along down the line, and quickly turned to speak to Miss Hodges.

Joyce tried to cling to Bobby, but the younger girl, heedless of Joyce's embarrass-

ment, noticed friends of her own, and hurried off, leaving Joyce to her own devices. Joyce wandered about, knowing no one, and feeling too shy to make any advances. No one heeded her, and at last she settled into a quiet corner to watch the gayety of the other girls. Before long the floor was cleared, and the girls began dancing together. The girls who had been at Miss Brent's the previous year, took the initiative and invited the New Girls to dance. No one paid any attention to Joyce, who, feeling more than ever out of it, huddled into her corner.

She heard some one come up behind her, and then as one girl settled herself, Joyce heard a familiar voice say: "That was lovely! You do dance so well!"

Joyce whirled around so quickly that she nearly fell off her chair. The sudden movement attracted the attention of the other girl, and she turned to face Joyce. For a minute, the two stared at one another, and then they spoke, in almost simultaneous words.

"Why, Joyce Hunter," said the other girl. "What are you doing *here?*"

"Why, Helen Trowbridge!" said Joyce. "What are you doing *here?*"

For a minute longer they stared, then Helen Trowbridge tossed her head.

“I have a very dear friend here. I don’t suppose you have met her. She belongs to the Turk’s Head Club.” Helen turned back to the girl with whom she had been dancing. Joyce looked up. It was Frances Evans.

“I suppose,” Helen Trowbridge sneered over her shoulder to Joyce, but largely for Frances Evans’ enlightenment, “I suppose *your friend*, Patricia Strickland, is here?”

“Patricia is ill,” she flared, “but I am very happy to say that she *is* my friend!”

The other two girls ignored her, and giggled together over something imperceptible to Joyce. She stood up abruptly, ready to flare into one of her rare bursts of temper, when Bobby Howland rushed up to her.

“Ah—there you are! Joyce, I’ve been wondering who had eloped with you. It’s time for eats. Do come along.”

Joyce gulped down her anger and went with Bobby, but she was unable to forget entirely the actions of Helen Trowbridge and Frances Evans. However, Joyce was a good dancer, and under the guidance of Bobby Howland, she became acquainted with several Old Girls

who kindly asked her to dance. It was a bit difficult at first, being led by another girl, but Joyce soon acquired the art.

The evening which had started so badly, really ended very well. Joyce finally went to her room, tired and happy, and quickly fell into a deep sleep.

Saturday morning was a busy one. Joyce flew around, packing a suit-case, taking only two of her few dresses, since, as she expected, she was only going to the country, and would not need much of a wardrobe there. Bobby overslept, and Joyce had to rouse her in time for breakfast. Marion made no pretense of rising at all.

"Lazybones!" Bobby made a face at her sister, charming in a lacy negligèe. "I've a notion to tell Hodge-Podge on you."

"Run along, little one." Marion smiled lazily at her.

"Now, I'll guarantee Joycie's been up for hours," said Bobby, brushing back her slick locks.

"No, not for hours," said Joyce. "But I'm all packed."

"That's right," said Bobby, as she linked her arm in Joyce's and strolled out through

the door. "Don't forget we're going up to the country, dearest. I ordered the car for ten."

"All right," Marion stifled a yawn. "Close the door softly."

Joyce had already written Raoul a note, explaining the change of plans, and telling him of his invitation to the Howland home. While she was at breakfast, she was called to the telephone. It was Ray, saying he would be ready at any time.

"Got an evening dress, Joy?" he asked.

"Yes, I have one."

"Better take it along."

"Oh, surely not, Ray. Bobby said it was just the country."

"Better take it, anyway."

Joyce thought at first that she would follow Ray's advice, but, in order to do so, she would either have to pack a second bag, or repack the first one; moreover, after one look at the dress, still crumpled from the reception, she decided not to take it.

"Foolish, anyway," she thought to herself. "What use would I have for an evening dress in the country?"

The car arrived very promptly at ten. Marion was ready, much to Joyce's surprise.

"Oh, Walters," Bobby stood with one foot on the running-board of the car and looked impishly up into the impassive face of the chauffeur, "do let me drive."

"No, Miss."

"But I like to drive!" expostulated Bobby, half teasing, half in earnest.

"Mrs. Howland's orders, Miss." Walters still looked straight ahead.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Bobby, as she catapulted herself into the rear seat, "I'll never learn to be an expert in the city."

"You're young yet," Marion consoled her, half mockingly as the car started.

Ray was soon picked up looking very attractive in a neat suit and a new hat. Joyce was beginning to appreciate the value of looking well, and was very proud of her brother. Ray had already met Marion Howland, and Bobby appealed to his sense of humor, so it was a very cheerful carload that started out for the destination on Long Island.

Joyce enjoyed every minute of the ride, through the busy, crowded streets of New York, and later, out along the highway, with a glimpse now and then of the gleaming

waters of the Sound. She was round-eyed at the luxuriant beauty of some of the country homes whose expansive grounds they passed. And finally, when the car turned in at one of these beautiful estates, Joyce gasped for breath.

“I thought we were coming to the country,” she accused Bobby.

“We are. It is.” Bobby looked surprised.

“I hope you took my advice,” said Raoul.

Joyce did not answer, but she looked worried, thinking of the two dresses she had brought.

Joyce had thought her room at school attractive, but the room she had in the Howland home far surpassed it. On one side the windows looked down on a garden, still beautiful, though many of the choicest blooms had now faded. On another side of the room the small-paned windows were swung open, admitting a view of the not too distant Sound, gleaming in the early fall sunlight. Joyce drew a deep breath, filled with ecstasy at the sight before her, and forgot her scanty wardrobe. But she was abruptly reminded of it when a maid entered and offered to unpack for her.

"No, thanks," Joyce blushed uncomfortably.

The maid showed surprise, but only for an instant.

"I'll do it myself," Joyce tried to smile.

"Very well, Miss. Is there anything else you wish?"

Joyce shook her head miserably.

But all her troubles vanished at the luncheon table. Mrs. Howland, a very busy woman, stopped only long enough to greet her guests and departed. The three girls and Raoul were the only ones at the table, although Roy Walker had been expected.

"He'll probably blow in for dinner," sniffed Bobby. "That's his idea of promptness."

"Bobby!" protested Marion.

Bobby smiled impishly. Although never very dignified, at Miss Brent's she had restrained some of her tomboy tendencies, but here at home, she was wholly natural.

"How did you ever acquire the name of Bobby?" asked Raoul curiously. "It always makes me think of my young brother."

"Oh, Dad's name is Robert. He thought I'd be a son, which I should have been, that

he could name Robert, also. But when I was, disappointingly, another daughter, he stuck to his point and called me Roberta. Sweet, feminine name! Hence Bobby. But he's an old duck, is Dad." Bobby's face softened. "However," she added in her sprightly manner, "that doesn't explain what we're to do to-night, nor, for that matter, this afternoon."

"We might have a dance," said Marion with a touch of hauteur, and Joyce's heart quailed again as she thought of her clothes. "A very informal one," continued Marion, "no outsiders, so that you could come, Bobby."

"Thanks," said Bobby dryly. "You're so kind. Do you think Roy Walker will be here by then?"

"Oh, yes, surely. We can dance to radio music. Saturday-evening programs are generally very fair."

"O. K. That leaves three girls and two men. I'll see if Jimmy Houston can come over."

"That lanky creature!" Marion tip-tilted her nose.

"He isn't very beautiful," admitted Bobby,

"but he's a dear. I often wish I could add him to my menagerie."

"I must see this famous menagerie," urged Joyce.

"Of course. Plenty of time. How about doing something this afternoon?"

"Is it too cold for swimming?" asked Joyce, hopefully.

"Ask your brother!" exclaimed Bobby with a laugh in her voice and a sparkle in her eyes.

"You children might go sailing," said Marion languidly.

"Don't be so uppish," said Bobby. "I suppose you plan to stay home and wait for Roy Walker. You're foolish! I'd never be here waiting for him. I'd be a million miles away!"

Marion tossed her head, but a tell-tale blush spread over her cheeks and she did not answer.

"Sailing sounds good to me," said Ray, "although I must admit I don't know much about handling a boat."

Joyce noticed that the sisters exchanged glances, and from the look of surprise on Marion's face and the roguish smile on Bobby's she deduced that Ray had not been included in the sailing party.

Nevertheless, Raoul went with Bobby and Joyce down the Sound in the cat-boat. Joyce had never been in a sailboat before, and she found it a most exhilarating sport. Bobby sailed the boat, and sailed it well. As the spray flew up and over Joyce, she laughed aloud in the sheer joy of living. Bobby looked at her approvingly.

“I wish they had made your kind oftener!” she ejaculated.

They sailed up and down the Sound for some time. On the final return trip Bobby noticed a small cove with a stream, that attracted her attention.

“Cracky! I thought I knew this place like a book, but I’ve never seen that before.”

“It must have been there,” laughed Ray. “Here, where are you going?”

“To explore.”

“Better not,” said Ray. “We’re late now.”

Bobby hesitated.

“You know what you said about Roy Walker,” Ray reminded her.

Bobby flashed him an enigmatic look. Nevertheless, she brought the boat about and sailed for home.

The evening was cool, but not too cool.

Mrs. Howland readily agreed to the small informal dance proposed by Marion.

"Your father will be here later this evening. We are not going out. We shall come and join you."

"That helps," Bobby capered about. "Jimmy Houston can't come. He said he hurt his ankle in football practise, but Dad's a real dancer."

But again Bobby was disappointed, for Mr. Howland was very late in arriving. Marion managed in some subtle feminine way to have both Ray and Roy Walker dance attendance on her, so that Bobby and Joyce were left to themselves. They danced a few times together and then Bobby left in disgust.

"Come on, Joycie."

"Where to?" Joyce was glad enough to be off the floor and away from Marion, who was wearing a charming evening gown. Even Bobby had appeared in a simple dinner dress which set off her boyish beauty.

"I know!" Bobby had a sudden inspiration.

"The menagerie?" asked Joyce, who had not yet seen the animals.

"It's too late for that. The children are all asleep now. Come on."

“Where to?” repeated Joyce as she followed.

“Sailing!”

“Sailing!” cried Joyce, bewildered.

“Of course. It’s moonlight. Wait here. I’ll need a wrap of some sort. Want a coat?”

“No, thanks,” said Joyce. “This dress is heavy!”

Bobby disappeared, but was quickly back again, a soft wrap over her arm. Nimbly she led the way to the boat-house. Joyce followed, feeling all the while as though she were being included in some prank, and that Bobby was her own small brother and not Miss Roberta Howland at all.

“I just must explore that cove,” explained Bobby as she and Joyce entered the boat.

“Are we going away back there?” expostulated Joyce.

“That isn’t far,” scoffed Bobby.

Sailing at this hour was even more thrilling than it had been earlier in the day. It was moonlight, and the boat broke the silver ripples, with the water lapping against its side. All was quiet, except for occasional bursts of music that floated over the water to them.

“I wonder if Jimmy really did hurt his ankle?” said Bobby.

"He must have, if he said so," protested Joyce!

"Not necessarily! He may have gone elsewhere to dance," explained Bobby.

"Oh," said Joyce. She looked at Bobby queerly, and Bobby flashed her a smile in return.

For the most part, there was little conversation. Joyce deeply enjoyed the beauty of the night and the motion of the boat, although she began to wish she had brought a coat, for the air was chilly.

"There it is!" Bobby suddenly swung the boat to the left.

Cautiously and cleverly she maneuvered the craft. The cove was shallow, and a long arm of water stretched inland.

"I must explore that!" insisted Bobby. Joyce was silent.

Up the quiet moonlit stretch of water they went. There was no wind now, between these banks of overhanging trees, and the boat slowed.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Bobby.

There was a soft grating sound, and the boat was stuck fast in sand and mud.

"Low tide!" said Bobby. "I never

thought of that. It looks as though we'd have to wade."

Wet and shivering, the two girls reached land. They had a hard scramble up the steep, thickly-grown bank. Courageously Bobby struck off in the general direction of her home. Joyce followed, shivering.

"I didn't intend to let you in for anything like this when I invited you out here," said Bobby, half giggling. "I hope you don't mind."

Joyce managed a smile. She was cold, tired, and uncomfortable, but Bobby was a dear.

"Do you often get into pranks like this?" she asked.

"Frequently," admitted Bobby.

"I'm beginning to think there is some truth in that charge of tomboy."

On through brambles and underbrush the two girls struggled. It was growing late, and Joyce began to feel a trifle alarmed. It seemed to her that they had been walking for hours when Bobby paused abruptly.

"What's that?"

Joyce looked, a queer, choking feeling gripping her. Not far away a flash-light was

being swung in circles. The moon had dropped from sight now, and in the dim starlight the two girls made out the figure of a man.

“Run!” said Joyce.

“No,” said Bobby stanchly. “Here. We’ll hide.”

She dragged Joyce toward a hedge near by, but just as the two girls were crawling under it, the man’s voice boomed out.

“Bobby! Bobby! Oh—Roberta!”

“Dad!” gasped Bobby. Then she looked swiftly about and giggled.

“Joyce, we’re hiding in our own hedge. Here I am back home again, and didn’t even know it.”

CHAPTER VIII

JOYCE'S BIRTHDAY

MONDAY morning found the girls back in school again, none the worse for their experience, although Marion now plainly considered Joyce to be of the age and wisdom, or rather foolishness, of Bobby.

Joyce had a surprise waiting for her, an unpleasant one, when she entered her room late Sunday evening. In a prominent place on her dressing-table was a vivid pink card. Joyce picked it up, wondering. Typewritten upon it was the command to see Miss Hodges at once. Late as it was, Joyce tapped on Bobby's door and showed her the card.

"Phew!" said Bobby. "What have you done now?"

"I don't know!" Joyce was bewildered.

"Better wait until morning, anyway. It's too late this evening to go down."

Joyce followed Bobby's advice. The next morning, not even waiting to see if she received any letters, she hurried to Miss Hodges private office. That person received her with most open hostility.

“Will you kindly account for your absence of Saturday and Sunday?” Her voice and manner were very severe.

“Why, I went home with Bobby Howland!” answered Joyce in open astonishment.

“Did you have permission to do so?”

“Permission? I was invited.”

“Permission from the school,” explained Miss Hodges, her voice still very acid.

“I didn’t know I needed it,” answered Joyce, still astonished.

“You are very rude!”

“I didn’t mean to be,” apologized Joyce, “only—truly—I had no idea—”

Miss Hodges looked at her searchingly, undecided whether Joyce was cleverly lying or whether she was just ignorant. After a lengthy pause, during which Joyce looked steadfastly into the eyes of the older woman, Miss Hodges picked up a pen and scribbled a few hasty words.

“Kindly take this to Miss Brent. You will, I believe, find her in her own office, and not too busy at this hour of the day. However, if you are unable to locate her, return to me—at once.”

Joyce picked up the note, and feeling very

much like a naughty small boy, went in search of Miss Brent.

She found her, as Miss Hodges had predicted, in her own office. Joyce was relieved to find, also, that she was alone. With no word but "Good morning", she laid Miss Hodge's note on the desk. Miss Brent picked it up, read it slowly, read it again, and then looked at Joyce.

"Well?" she said.

Joyce, still firm in her own conviction that she had done no intentional wrong, looked straight at Miss Brent.

"I do not know what Miss Hodges has told you. I went to Bobby Howland's without asking permission. I did not know that permission was necessary. You see, I am accustomed to public schools. After lesson hours, our time is our own."

"Still," said Miss Brent, "some one in authority knows your general whereabouts, your mother or father—a guardian."

"Yes, that is true," acknowledged Joyce.

"Well, when you are here in our care, we supply the place of the guardian, and we must be doubly careful, for there are so many of you, so few of us, and the responsibility is so great."

"I understand," said Joyce.

"Most of the girls are aware that they must not even leave the buildings without giving a report of their destination, and when they do so, it is a very serious misdemeanor."

"I am very sorry," Joyce felt uncomfortable. "I honestly didn't mean to disobey."

"I see you didn't." Miss Brent smiled for the first time. "Of course, I cannot let you go entirely unpunished, for the sake of the other girls, but I will lighten your sentence. Ordinarily, in a case of this sort, a girl is deprived of all privileges for at least a month. However, I will shorten your time to ten days."

"Just what does it mean to be deprived of privileges?" asked Joyce. "I do not wish to commit another blunder."

"For the next ten days you are not to leave this group of buildings for any reason whatsoever. You cannot go down-town to shop, nor to the theatre, in case there are any theatre parties, no horseback riding, absolutely no excuse to leave the buildings."

"I see," said Joyce. "I am really very sorry about this, Miss Brent. And," she added as an afterthought, "I didn't mean to

be rude to Miss Hodges. I was merely surprised.”

Miss Brent dismissed her with a nod, already deep in the day's problems.

Joyce went soberly to her room. She still had half an hour before her first class. On her dressing-table she found two letters which Bobby had thoughtfully brought up to her. One was postmarked Westcott, and Joyce recognized Irma's handwriting. The other, a large, soft, grey envelope, carried the New York postmark, and was addressed in a handwriting unfamiliar to Joyce. Eager as she was to read Irma's letter, curiosity prevailed upon her to open the grey envelope first. It was a charming note from Mrs. Strickland, stating that Patricia was much improved, and was able to be up and about, and that Joyce was to come to them on Wednesday for lunch and the afternoon.

Joyce's first reaction was joy. She was to see Patricia again. It made her realize how much she had missed her friend, made her realize, too, that perhaps, in the midst of all the excitement she had been a wee bit homesick. Mrs. Strickland was such a dear! Joyce was anxious, too to see the Strickland

home. Wednesday! That was two days off—not long to wait! Then sudden realization came to her. “Under no consideration whatsoever are you to leave these buildings.” Miss Brent had said she was not to go for ten days. Tears started in Joyce’s eyes, and for just a minute rebellion swept her. It wasn’t fair! She hadn’t meant to disobey. They should have explained their old rules to her. Then her sense of justice asserted itself, and she regained her mental balance. She was well aware of the maxim: “Ignorance of the law is no excuse for crime.” Often and often had she heard her father quote that. Then, too, Miss Brent had really been most fair. The sentence had been shortened to ten days. Toward Miss Brent, Joyce had that feeling of respect that any one in an inferior position has toward one in authority who is just. A little feeling of bitterness toward Miss Hodges crept into Joyce’s heart, however. She might have explained the rules more carefully. She might have been kinder this morning. Well, the damage was done, and Joyce knew she must suffer the consequences. Even before she opened Irma’s letter, Joyce took time to sit down and write a note to Mrs. Strickland,

explaining very carefully the whole situation. She felt somehow that it would be easier to write than to telephone.

That done, she eagerly opened Irma's letter. But it was a bad day for Joyce. Irma, jealous of Joyce's good fortune, and indignant that she herself must teach in a small country school, had written sheet after sheet of complaint.

She wrote in part:

"Of course the school is near enough to town so that I can go back and forth every day. That's not so good, either. It means I have to get up *dreadfully* early, and then when I get home at night, Mother is so tired from looking after that big house and the boys, that I have to pitch in and help with dishes *almost every night!* Really, Joyce, I do think you are a bit selfish to be off there in New York, having such a gay time. Dad misses you dreadfully. And you know Mother never could manage Bobbie. He gets worse every day. Even Timmie said last night: 'Gee! I wish I could earn enough money to go to New York. I don't care how big that old town is. I'd be with Ray and Joy!' Mother silenced his outburst, however, by reminding him that in such case he would have to leave Bingo behind.

“Truly, if it weren't for Celia Laurence and two or three of the boys that call quite frequently in the evenings, I don't know what I should do!”

Five closely-written pages of it! All the same strain! Joyce let them slip from her fingers and flutter idly to the floor. Had she done wrong to come? Was she selfish? Her father and mother had seemed so pleased that she was to have such a wonderful opportunity. Of course Irma hated teaching. It was too bad she had to do it, but it was what Joyce herself expected to do in another two years, as soon as she finished at Normal. Joyce gulped. Timmie—bless his heart—did miss her. She missed him, too, and funny little Bobbie and Bingo. To say nothing of her mother and father! Tears were very near the surface.

Joyce was jerked from gloomy reflections by the sound of the gong.

“Raving maniac is correct!” she ejaculated. “That old gong won't even let me be homesick! Just as well, maybe. O dear! Where did I put that French book?”

A mad scramble, a dash, and she was off, down the hall.

And though at the start ten days seemed endless, they passed very quickly. Routine was running smoothly now, and Joyce hurried from one class to another, deeply interested in the novel subjects she was studying, many of which were not even in the curriculum of the Westcott High School. Her first class every morning was French. Joyce had always liked French, and was very well pleased to find herself so proficient in it. Many of these girls had had French governesses in childhood; some of them had even spent some time in France, and though Joyce did not speak so fluently as these, nevertheless, her diction was very clear. After French came Home Economics. That, too, Joyce found extremely interesting.

The class-rooms here were very different from those Joyce had been accustomed to. The seats in her school had been stiff and hard, of varnished pine, with desks before them, ink-stained, and often carved with initials. Here at Miss Brent's the seats were really comfortable chairs, with adjustable large arms on one side. These arms could be used for desks. The room itself was pleasant, and quietly and tastefully furnished. Only in

the largest classes were the chairs placed in rows, otherwise, they stood about at comfortable angles. Even the teacher's desk was inviting!

After her class in Home Economics, Joyce had a free period. Generally she rushed to her room to do a little studying, or to finish some neglected task, possibly to do a little sewing; but often she lingered outside the "Music House." This was a small building, containing half a dozen separate rooms in which the girls practised, who were studying music. Joyce was passionately fond of music, and though she could play no instrument, nor as she whimsically put it, "carry a tune, even in a basket," she listened eagerly whenever opportunity presented itself. So, unconsciously, she was acquiring a taste for the best.

Her last morning class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays was Interior Decoration, and again Joyce was absorbed with interest; but on Tuesdays and Thursdays at this time she studied Appreciation of Art. Here poor Joyce was all at sea. The teacher, Miss Keating, was decidedly inefficient. The girls paid scant heed to her talks, which were most uninteresting. Nevertheless, Joyce tried

to pay attention, and found herself lost in a maze of strange names and unexplained terms; names such as Tintoretto, Cimabue, Fra Angelico; terms such as fresco, murals, chrome, middle distance! Joyce appreciated beauty, but this seemed a strange way to her to learn to enjoy it.

Afternoons, as Joyce said, she "did things." Arts and Crafts alternated with Domestic Science, with time on Tuesdays and Thursdays for horseback riding, and alternate days for gymnasium, swimming, and tennis. Joyce was indeed a busy girl, and, as she wrote to her mother, she couldn't decide which of her afternoons she enjoyed most. She loved to swim, she loved to ride. Arts and Crafts was positively absorbing, and in Domestic Science they were allowed to eat the "mess" they cooked. It was a close choice.

At the end of her ten days of punishment Joyce came to the dinner-table beaming. The table-groups were changed ordinarily once a month, but this time they had been moved at the end of the second week. Joyce was pleased to be away from Frances Evans and her group. She found the girls at this table far more congenial, and her hostess was

the French teacher, a little round, butter-ball of a person, jolly, sparkling, having many difficulties still with the English language, often breaking forth into French, to the open amusement of the girls.

"Why so cheerful, Little Stranger?" asked Philo Cornish, one of the Old Girls who was not a New Yorker, and who had an odd sense of humor, and an enormous interest in every one and everything.

"Many reasons," Joyce replied, with a smile, as she seated herself.

"Are they namable ones?"

"Oh—quite," said Joyce. "In the first place, my time of durance vile has expired; in the second place, Patricia is coming back next Monday; in the third place—"

"I haven't a dog, in the first place!" interrupted Philo Cornish with a broad smile.

"—in the third place," continued Joyce, smiling back, "I have a birthday, day after to-morrow, and my brother has promised me a surprise."

"A birthday!" two or three of the girls chorused together. "When?"

"Friday," said Joyce.

"Splendid," said Philo Cornish. "Hear

that, Miss Derivieux? Miss Joyce here has a birthday. Shall I order the cake?"

Joyce looked blankly from Miss Derivieux, nodding merrily, to Philo Cornish.

"Cake? What cake? What do you mean?"

The older girl explained that whenever there was a birthday girl at the table, the other girls always clubbed together and gave her a cake for dinner on that day.

"How lovely!" said Joyce, with a little flush of pleasure.

"What kind shall I order? Pauline makes marvelous Lady Baltimore."

"Who is Pauline?" Joyce was curious.

"Pauline? One of the school fixtures. I believe her status is that of Pastry Cook. At any rate, she wears false eyebrows—and makes marvelous Lady Baltimore cake. But perhaps you would prefer chocolate," added Philo kindly.

"Oh, do let's have Lady Baltimore!" spoke up one of the other girls.

"By all means," agreed Joyce, who had never tasted Lady Baltimore, and who was fond of chocolate.

The cake more than surpassed all expectations. After the regular dessert, it was

brought to adorn the center of the table. It was a huge mound of creamy, frosted white, decorated with cherries and nuts. Joyce had the pleasure of cutting into it, and her slices were generous, so generous, in fact, that she was unable to finish her own piece, so rich was the combination of fruits, nuts, and frosting.

“Um! I’ve had a most perfect birthday,” she said as she settled back; “a box from home, roses from the Stricklands, a darling compact from Bobby Howland, and now this!”

“What was your brother’s surprise?” asked Philo Cornish.

Joyce shook her head.

“That is to be to-morrow. I am to meet him in the morning, and have a full day, shopping, lunch, and the matinee. Doesn’t that sound thrilling?”

“Immensely so. Be sure to ask permission before you leave,” teased Philo.

“I’ll never forget that again,” Joyce reassured her.

Saturday was fully as interesting as it sounded. Raoul called for Joyce, and informed her that the first thing they were going to do was shop.

“Shop!” exclaimed Joyce. “What for?”

“Clothes!”

“Clothes!” Joyce was astounded. “Why, Ray—”

“Listen,” said Ray, a bit awkwardly, but very determined. “I’m earning more money than I ever earned in my life before, and my needs are still simple. I don’t know what to do with my cash,” he added boyishly, “even after I send some home. I have a wad left. Now, I know these girls have scads of dresses, and you haven’t. That’s my surprise,” he ended.

So Joyce acquired three new gowns, two for evening wear, and one for street wear. Much to her surprise, she found that the street gown could be worn at once. So she put it on, and appeared where Ray was waiting for her, wearing it.

“Phew!” he gasped. “Why, Joy, you’re a regular stunner!”

They lunched in one of the big hotels, and the food, the music, the people about her, Ray’s smiling face across from her, put Joyce in a dreamy mood.

“Why so quiet, Joy?” asked Ray. “That isn’t like you.”

“I’m too thrilled to talk,” she informed him.

Nevertheless, they did talk, of Patricia, of New York, of school, of Ray's work, of Bobby Howland, and then of Bobbie Hunter, of Timmie, and of their mother and father.

"Gracious! We'll have to rush," said Raoul suddenly. "We'll be late for the matinee."

Proudly he walked behind Joyce as they left the dinning-room, and summoned a taxi. And Ray had reason to be proud of his sister. Her dress was very becoming, and already she was acquiring the grace and self-confidence for which Miss Brent's girls were famous.

The matinee was a charming little thing of small town life, and Joyce giggled at the troubles of the poor drug-clerk, sympathized with the girl anxious to meet new people, and became so immersed in the picture before her, which she knew so well, that she forgot she was actually in New York.

It was an elated Joyce that tumbled into bed that night.

"I do hope Patricia will like my new frocks. This has been the most wonderful birthday I've ever had. I'll never forget it!"

Which last remark Joyce had made at least fifteen times in the past seventeen years.

CHAPTER IX

TURK'S HEAD

THROUGH a long, rather lonesome Sunday, during which Raoul was preparing for his next week's work, and Bobby Howland was again at home, and during a busy Monday, Joyce eagerly looked for Patricia's arrival. Only disappointment awaited her.

Tuesday was a crisp, mid-October day, and Joyce looked forward to her horseback ride. For various reasons, only three girls rode that day. Joyce's pleasure was further heightened by the absence of Fran Evans. Joyce, who, as she herself said, rode "by instinct," was acquiring many pointers from the groom. She again chose to ride Thunder in spite of her earlier tumble from his back. This day she had no reason to hold him in, and he led the other horses to his heart's content. Joyce posted at a trot, galloped, single-footed, put the beautiful black Thunder through all his paces, much to his delight and her own.

She rushed up to her room, tingling with

cold air, with exercise, and with general well-being. She planned a quick, cold shower, a change to fresh clothes, thinking to don the simpler of her two new dinner gowns. She threw open the door impetuously — and stopped short. It seemed at first glance as though the room was filled to overflowing with girls, most of whose names Joyce did not even know. Her glance travelled quickly about. She noticed Frances Evans, and became immediately self-conscious; then she saw Patricia.

“Oh, Patricia, I’m so glad,” she began, rushing forward.

So eager was she that she did not notice a chair directly in her path. Joyce stumbled awkwardly, regained her balance, and stood, still awkwardly, amid the giggles of these girls.

“Falling seems to be your pet diversion,” said Fran Evans with a sneer. “Well, Patricia, I must run along. Do come down to my room this evening.”

Joyce flushed and looked at Patricia, but Patricia was busy saying good-bye to Fran Evans. A little pang smote Joyce. Was Patricia going to turn back into a snob again?

The girls melted away in the wake of Fran Evans, and the room was suddenly empty.

"I think you had better hurry a little if you are going to be ready for the dinner-gong," said Patricia coolly.

Joyce ran toward the shower, her eyes stinging, the thousand questions that bubbled on her lips, dying in a breath. But suddenly consolation came to her. Mrs. Strickland had said that Patricia was very irritable from her illness. That excused a great deal. When Joyce appeared again, her hair carefully combed, her ruddy cheeks glowing with health, and attired in her new dress, Patricia smiled at her.

"You do look nice, Joyce. What a darling gown! It looks like a New York purchase."

"It is," Joyce beamed, glad that the slight cloud had passed so easily. "Ray bought it for me."

"How is Ray? He sent me the cleverest book while I was ill."

"Ray is splendid. He asks for you constantly. It is such fun to have him here in New York."

"Isn't it?" assented Patricia.

Amiable and friendly once more, they wan-

dered down to dinner. Patricia did not sit at Joyce's table, and after dinner she disappeared. Joyce caught sight of her with Fran Evans, and, a little blue and disconsolate, she went to her room long before study period.

She decided to write a letter home, but before she got fairly started there was a tap on her door, and Bobby Howland entered. In no way, by her manner, or her speech, did Bobby betray the fact that she had witnessed Patricia's disappearance and Joyce's retirement.

"Hello, sailor!" she greeted Joyce as she curled herself up on the bed. "It strikes me you are industrious, unbecomingly so."

"I'm writing a letter home." Joyce managed a smile. Bobby always pleased and amused her.

"Sweet job! Thank your lucky stars you haven't a sister!" Bobby stretched luxuriously.

"Oh, but I have!" protested Joyce.

"An older sister?" Bobby sat erect, suddenly.

Joyce nodded.

"My heartfelt sympathies, old thing!"

Joyce smiled, much more easily this time.

“Have you and Marion been—disagreeing?”

Bobby shook her head.

“It wasn't a disagreement; it was a regular, downright row.”

“Oh, Bobby!” protested Joyce.

“Fact,” insisted Bobby. “Marion can be really awfully decent, but when she gets imbued with social aspirations—”

“Surely,” insisted Joyce, “Marion must be very popular among her friends. She is so pretty and has such lovely clothes.”

“So do heaps of the others,” said Bobby. “Honestly, do you know what a bunch of girls, Marion's age, makes me think of? A whole gang of cats, sitting on the back fence, clawing and fighting to shove one another off.”

Joyce laughed merrily, spontaneously this time.

“What a horrible picture, Bobby! They don't seem like that to me. I quite envy them.” A wistful little note crept into Joyce's voice.

“You! Envy them! Say, you're worth half a dozen of them, any time.”

Joyce blushed.

"What was your argument about?"

"I tell you it wasn't an argument," insisted Bobby. "It was a row."

"Very well, then, what was your row about?"

"Oh, this old Turk's Head!"

"Whatever that may be," said Joyce.

"Oh, there are secret clubs here, four of them, to be exact. Really, I'm surprised Miss Brent allows them. She generally shows better sense."

"What's so terrible about clubs?" asked Joyce innocently.

"Oh, they limit themselves to nine girls each. Naturally that does not include all the students—students, by the way, being a good term for us—by any means. The girls that belong run everything, or try to, and they get so exclusive that it's painful, while those outside are dreadfully hurt, of course."

"And is Marion trying to belong to Turk's Head?"

Bobby looked at her in amazement.

"Oh, Marion has belonged for three years; so has Patricia, and your precious Fran Evans."

Joyce's brow wrinkled into a puzzled frown.

"Then what was the disagreement over?"

"I have a terrible time persuading you that the proper word is 'row'," said Bobby with her impish grin. "Why, the trouble is that Turk's Head has three vacancies. As Marion's sister, I am entitled to first choice, an honor which I have refused to Marion, with much glee and gusto. Hence, Marion is furious because I won't be rushed."

"You refused?" Joyce was surprised. "Why?"

"Why? A dozen reasons!—Clubs are dumb. I'd rather be out in the great open spaces with the common herd. If you belong to a club, you get chummy with those girls and no others. Who wants to be penned in like that? Besides, Marion bosses me far too much—"

"I hadn't noticed it," interrupted Joyce with a giggle.

"—and besides, some more," continued Bobby unruffled, "I can't abide Fran Evans. If I'm going to belong to a club, I'm going to have the girls in it that I like." Bobby sat erect from where she had again slumped. "That's an idea. We'll form a club, Joyce

you and I. Any one can belong who has the necessary qualifications." Bobby was partly jesting, partly in earnest.

"Just what will those qualifications be?" asked Joyce, who had long since abandoned all idea of letter-writing.

"Well," said Bobby, slowly, "they won't be money, and they won't be clothes, and they won't be beaux."

"That eliminates a good deal," said Joyce. "What *will* they be?"

"Oh," Bobby gazed idly at the ceiling, "character, good sportsmanship, the ability to get into scrapes, and out of them again; and, oh, yes, above all, a sense of humor. Great guns! There goes the gong!"

Bobby rolled hastily off the bed and started for the door.

"Your club should be most interesting with all those qualifications," teased Joyce.

"You'll see. I'll do it yet!" Bobby flew out the door.

Joyce laughed as she picked up her French book. Bobby was a dear. When Patricia slipped into the room a minute later, she found Joyce busily studying, the expression on her face happy and contented.

But Joyce's troubles were by no means over. The next day, as she and Patricia were dressing for dinner, came a tap on the door, and Bobby Howland stuck her head in.

"My compliments, Joyce, and are you dated for Hallowe'en?"

"Hallowe'en?" gasped Joyce.

"A week from Saturday," grinned Bobby.

"O my, so it is! It doesn't seem possible."

"Howsomever, it is!" answered Bobby.

"And I repeat, 'Are you dated?'"

"No."

Bobby's face lighted.

"Would you and that marvellous brother of yours come to us, then? It will be our last week-end in the country. We're closing the house the following Monday."

"Oh, I'd love to," said Joyce. "I'll ask Raoul, and let you know."

"K. O." Bobby shut the door and went gayly on her way.

Patricia, who had been sitting silently at her dressing-table, whirled at the sound of the closing door.

"You and Bobby Howland are getting pretty chummy, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes," beamed Joyce. "Isn't she a dear?"

Patricia did not answer this, and Joyce looked at her in surprise.

"Don't you like Bobby Howland?" she asked.

"Yes." Patricia was noncommittal. "Where did she become so well acquainted with Raoul?"

"We spent a week-end with them at their country home. I thought I had told you, Patricia."

"Hardly the kind of *country* you're used to, was it, Joyce?"

Patricia's tone was unkind, and Joyce looked at her quickly, badly hurt for a minute; then again she recalled Mrs. Strickland's warning about Patricia.

"No," she said quietly, "it was vastly different, as you well know, Patricia."

A faint flush stained Patricia's cheeks and died away again. There was a strained silence in the room while the girls continued to dress. In the silence the dinner gong rang startlingly loud.

"Hurry up, Patricia, we'll be late," cried Joyce gayly, glad of an opportunity to break

the unpleasant stillness. She caught up her one and only scarf and started for the door.

Patricia, who was far from ready, looked up, anger still glowing in her eyes.

“Don't be such a boob!”

“Boob!” gasped Joyce, startled as much at the word, as to find that Patricia was still angry.

“Of course! It's only the scared nobodies, the girls who have no standing here, and little sense, either, that rush here and there every time the gong rings!”

“But,” gasped Joyce, “I thought that was what we were supposed to do.”

“Don't be such an ignoramus!” snapped Patricia, and turned her back.

Hurt, blinded by the tears that would come, Joyce opened the door and stumbled out into the hall. Why had she ever come to Miss Brent's? Was Patricia going to be like this all year? She didn't *seem* like Patricia.

So blinded was Joyce by her hurt and her tears, that she did not look where she was going. So it happened that she ran straight into another girl who was hurrying up the hall.

“Oh, I beg your—” began Joyce, but was cut short.

“Why, Joyce Hunter! You here! How delightful!”

Joyce looked up quickly through her tears.

“Why, Mary Taintor!” she exclaimed joyously. “When did you come? I didn’t know you were here. Are you going to stay?”

“Indeed I’m going to stay. I’m a little later than usual this year. Just got in, heard about Patricia’s illness, and was just rushing up to see her. I didn’t know about you.”

“Oh, I’m so glad to see you.” It seemed to Joyce suddenly as though all her troubles had melted.

“Well, bless you heart!” Mary slipped an arm around Joyce, pretending not to see her tears. “Come along back while I greet Patricia.”

“But the dinner gong has rung,” expostulated Joyce.

“Oh, I’ll take the blame,” answered Mary easily. “I’m forgiven much my first day or two.”

Reluctantly Joyce turned and re-entered the room she had so recently quitted. To her utter surprise, she found Patricia flung across the bed—and in tears!

“Why, Patricia!” Joyce rushed to her alarmed. “What’s the matter? Are you ill?”

Mary, wise beyond her years, stood still in the doorway.

“No—no,” Patricia’s voice was muffled.

“What is wrong?” Joyec was distracted.

Patricia sat up and wiped her eyes.

“Oh, Joyce, I’m such a beast, and I don’t mean to be, really, only sometimes—Why, Mary Taintor!”

In a flash Patricia was off the bed and hugging Mary.

“The happy family is all here,” said Mary, as she hugged Patricia in return. “I’ve a million things to tell you, Patricia, and a million more to ask, but I really think we should hurry down to dinner. The gong rang nearly ten minutes ago, and Joyce looks really worried.”

“I’ll hurry and wash my eyes, and dab on a little powder,” said Patricia, the old sweet Patricia that Joyce knew so well. “Joyce is the promptest thing. As for me, you know I’m always getting marks for being tardy.”

“The queer part of it is,” said Joyce, “is that tardiness is a bad fault of mine, one I

promised myself never to commit here at Miss Brent's."

"We'll take the blame this time," said Mary. "Patricia," she called, "I'm to be a boarder again this year."

"Gorgeous!" said Patricia, appearing with her face shining, partly from joy, and partly from scrubbing. "When did you get here?"

"About half an hour ago."

"Where have you been this summer?" asked Joyce.

"Dad and I hunted bears in the Canadian Rockies the first part of the summer," explained Mary. "Then Mother came on, and we all took the trip up to Alaska."

"How marvellous!" sighed Patricia, who was now putting the finishing touches to her toilet.

"Mighty interesting," said Mary. "I never saw so much salmon and so many wrecks in my life."

"Wrecks!" ejaculated Joyce and Patricia together.

"Yes, every once in a while we would see a half-sunk boat, and our captain, who, by the way, was a rare soul, would tell us about it. He had some tales that would make your

blood run cold. I'll relay some of them to you later on. Ready, Patricia?"

Talking and chattering, the girls finally went down. They entered the dining-room in an unusual stillness. Miss Hodges was standing by her table, announcing that basket-ball practice was to start the next day.

Joyce hurried to her table, all excitement, but she found most of the girls rather bored with the topic of basket-ball. Philo Cornish alone was interested in the subject.

"Did you ever play?" she asked Joyce.

"I did play some, last year, but that was the first time."

"Be sure to turn out to-morrow."

Joyce nodded and then gave her attention to the general conversation, which was, for the most part, of Hallowe'en, and of the party which was ordinarily held at Miss Brent's home on that night.

As Joyce was leaving the table, some one tapped her on the shoulder. Joyce looked up in surprise, for the tapping had been done by Fran Evans. Without saying a word, Fran dropped something small and hard into Joyce's hand. Joyce was so busy examining the strange object that she did not even

notice Fran slip away. The object was small and flat, made apparently of deep-red sealing-wax. On one side was the impression of a very fierce Turk's head, turban and all; on the other side, scratched evidently with a pin, were the words: "This very day, nine-thirty, Kismet!"

Joyce looked around in bewilderment. The words meant absolutely nothing to her. What could they mean? The only person who could explain at all was Patricia. Joyce sought her at once.

Patricia looked pleased when she saw the object in Joyce's hand.

"Explain? Of course I can. It's a bid to the Turk's Head meeting,—a rush, in other words."

"But where? When?" asked Joyce, who was not especially thrilled.

"This very day at nine-thirty! To-night, of course, although I haven't been notified yet."

"Where do we meet?" insisted Joyce, hardly knowing whether she was pleased or not.

"Kismet. That's Fran Evans. The meeting must be in her room."

In spite of her doubts, Joyce went to the meeting. Special permission had been granted to Fran Evans to entertain the club from nine-thirty to ten-thirty. Joyce went under Patricia's guidance, and Fran Evans was most cordial. Besides Patricia and Fran Evans and Marion Howland, there were three other girls already members of Turk's Head—Isobel Geoffrey, Nancy Stevens, and Gladys Heminway. Joyce was introduced to these girls, but the only name she retained was that of Gladys Heminway. Gladys was a girl so pretty, so dainty, so beautifully dressed, that for a minute Joyce wondered if ever before she had seen such a raving beauty. Then she turned loyally to Patricia, and, after a second look at her, decided that though Gladys Heminway might be pretty, she decidedly lacked a quality which was much in evidence in Patricia. Joyce pondered what this quality could be. Was it ability? Humor? Joyce decided finally that Patricia's face showed animation and character, two things which the doll-like Gladys lacked entirely.

The three new girls who were evidently being rushed were Joyce, Helen Trowbridge,

and Bobby Howland; a wider diversity would have been hard to find.

"Doesn't Mary Taintor belong?" Joyce managed to whisper to Patricia.

Patricia shook her head.

"Why not?"

"Tell you later," answered Patricia.

Joyce's attention was distracted by a giggle on the other side of her.

"I see you've fallen a victim," said Bobby in a low tone.

"I thought you had refused to be rushed!" Joyce spoke in the same low tone.

"I only came because I wanted to see how you'd react."

Before Joyce could answer that, the meeting was called to order. Fran Evans presided. The business meeting was very short, being mostly the roll-call, but it gave Joyce time to gaze about the room. It was a room similar in many ways to the one Joyce and Patricia occupied. The one feature that was outstandingly different in Joyce's eyes was the number of photographs. On desk, on dressing-table, from silver frames and ivory frames, men's faces looked forth, never any two alike.

"Gracious," Joyce whispered to Bobby Howland as soon as noise began again, "I didn't know there were so many men in the world."

"Fran's little boy-chums," Bobby made a long face. "Wait till they get started talking!"

Joyce did not have long to wait. Fran Evans announced that since this was a social meeting, lunch would be served promptly. It was a dainty lunch, and Joyce wondered how Fran had been able to smuggle in so much food, which, as she knew, was strictly against school rules.

"Miss Hodges thinks we can rush without serving food! Imagine!" announced Fran.

"What Hodge-Podge doesn't know won't hurt her," simpered Gladys Heminway.

"And there's plenty she *doesn't* know," said Bobby grimly.

"These cakes are delicious." Helen Trowbridge was in her element. "Fran dearest, where *did* you get them?"

"Yes, Fran *dearest*," mimicked Bobby Howland, who made no secret of her dislike for Helen Trowbridge, "do tell us! Surely you didn't buy them at Alderby's?"

Fran Evans gave Bobby a withering look, but Bobby refused to wither.

“And who *is* this raving beauty?” Bobby struck a pose before a large, silver-framed photograph of a young man. “I’ll bet he has his hair marcelled!”

“That,” answered Helen Trowbridge with all the frigidness at her command, “is *my* cousin!”

“A thousand pardons!” Bobby dropped a deep curtsy. “I might have known!”

This remark left Helen Trowbridge in some doubt as to its exact meaning, so she turned away.

In spite of Bobby’s presence and assistance, Joyce was soon lost in the whirl of conversation. Accustomed to, and interested in, such wholesome things as horseback riding, picnics, swimming, camping and hikes, even, frequently, house-work, economy, and the care of younger brothers, Joyce was completely at sea in the talk of these girls. Even as Bobby had prophesied, the talk was all of boys and dress, hair-dressing, new hair-cuts, new-style permanent waves, the newest, most expensive powders and perfumes, and again boys, silly, romantic remarks about

them. Joyce was relieved when ten-thirty arrived.

“Well,” Patricia asked when she and Joyce were once more alone in their room. “What do you think of Turk’s Head?”

“What do you do? What do you accomplish?” Joyce tactfully avoided a direct answer.

“Oh, we’re just a social club. Really Turk’s Head is hard to make. It’s considered quite an honor here at Miss Brent’s to get a bid to it.”

“Why doesn’t Mary Taintor belong?” asked Joyce suddenly. “She is certainly popular and prominent here.”

Patricia hesitated a short minute.

“Mary won’t belong,” she answered briefly. “She has been bid twice.”

“Why won’t she?” asked Joyce, though she thought she knew.

Patricia shrugged.

“She’s been very sweet about it. She said that all the other clubs asked her, too, and since she couldn’t join one group without eliminating the others, she just wouldn’t join any.”

Although Joyce said no word aloud, she

secretly applauded Mary Taintor's stand, and firmly decided to do likewise.

"Although," she thought whimsically to herself, "I shall not be bid to all four, most likely not even to one!"

CHAPTER X

A LETTER FROM SALLY

THE first basket-ball practice was next day. All aglow, Joyce went to the gymnasium, determined to make at least second team, and even hoping for a place on the first. There were a great many girls there ahead of her, for, despite the apathy at Joyce's table, a large number were interested in basket-ball, and it was considered a real honor to make the team.

Joyce sat down to watch proceedings, and Philo Cornish came over and sat beside her.

"I'm glad to see you turned out," she said to Joyce.

"Oh, I wouldn't miss it!" Joyce had her usual enthusiasm.

"I do hope I can make second team this year. I was an awful dub at this game last year."

Joyce looked at her in surprise. Philo Cornish was a large girl, very strong and very athletic in appearance.

"Aren't you on the first team?" asked Joyce, showing the surprise she felt.

“My gracious, no! Even Patricia is only on the second team, and I think she is one of the best players.”

“Patricia is a mighty good player. How does it happen she isn't on first?”

“The other girls are better, that's all. Miss Brockwell is a very fair coach and referee.”

Joyce gulped and her heart sank a little. If Patricia was only on the second team, where would she be? Nevertheless, Joyce was a plucky person, and she determined to do her best. She watched carefully while the other girls tried out, trying to see where they failed, what mistakes they made, so that she might avoid them.

“Although,” Joyce reflected, “I can probably find a whole list of new mistakes, all by myself.”

The girls who had been on the first team the previous year were called to the floor. There were only three of them, since four of the team had been Seniors and had graduated.

Miss Brockwell pulled a wry face.

“This is not a very heavy foundation. Let's see—Alice, you were guard, weren't you?”

“Yes, Miss Brockwell,” answered a small, dark girl who was very quick in her actions.

“And you two were side-centers. H’m! Patricia Strickland, come up and play center on first team; Frances Evans, as forward. Philo Cornish, you may try out as the other guard”—Miss Brockwell paused and looked about. Joyce noticed the look of happiness on Philo’s face and was glad for her. “Marion Howland, do you think you could play forward?” Miss Brockwell finished her search.

“I’d like to try, Miss Brockwell,” replied Marion.

“All right. Does every one understand the line-up?” She went over it briefly. “Now for the second team.”

Joyce’s heart beat quickly as she eagerly watched Miss Brockwell’s selections for the vacancies on the second team. And it beat harder than ever when she was selected for temporary center against Patricia. It was the one place where Joyce thought she might have a chance, for she had played all last winter against Patricia, and knew most of her moves. The line-up was finally completed, and the whistle blown for a start. But luck was against Joyce. The floor was strange to her, and one which Patricia knew well. She missed the ball entirely on the first jump, and

grew a trifle flustered. She tried doubly hard after that, and, instead of improving matters, made them worse. She caught the ball once after several minutes' strenuous practice, while she was almost in the middle of the floor. Instead of passing it to her forward, as Miss Brockwell was instructing her to do, she tried for a spectacular play. She aimed for the basket, but, in her hurry and excitement, the ball went in the wrong direction entirely. Even had it gone straight, it would have fallen far short of its goal. As it was, Philo Cornish easily caught it, tossed it to Patricia, who, with splendid team-work, passed it over Joyce's prompt guard to Marion Howland; in two seconds the ball slid through the bottomless basket, swishing the fringe as it went.

With flushed face, Joyce went back to position, determined to do better. But she did not have the opportunity. Miss Brockwell commanded the girls to rest a few minutes. When they were again called to the floor, Bobby Howland was in Joyce's place.

Bobby, though younger than most of the girls, was almost as tall as Joyce, and naturally athletic. She played a splendid game, even

though she was comparatively new in basketball. With a sinking heart, Joyce watched her.

Again the whistle was blown for rest and Philo Cornish, breathing hard, dropped down beside Joyce.

“Hard luck!” she offered consolingly, “but don’t give up yet.”

“She’s a better player than I am,” Joyce swallowed hard.

“She’s a corker! I hope she doesn’t beat me out on the first team.”

“Oh, there’s no danger of that!” protested Joyce.

“You never can tell,” commented the other girl. “I’m going into the pool directly practice is over. Do you want to come?”

Despite her disappointment, Joyce was elated. Philo Cornish was an Old Girl, a senior, and very popular despite her queer name and frank manners. There was no pretense about Philo. If she was your friend, she was your friend through thick and thin.

“I’d love to,” answered Joyce. “May I bring Bobby Howland, too?”

“Our mutual rival?” Philo laughed good-naturedly. “By all means!”

The indoor pool was not large, but it was

beautifully constructed and tiled. Swimming there didn't seem like real swimming to Joyce, but she enjoyed it. She was not an expert swimmer, but she loved the sport; moreover, her stroke had greatly improved last summer at camp.

The three girls were alone in the pool. The others had gone under showers, and dashed off to various appointments.

"I tried to get Patricia to come in, but she wouldn't," said Joyce.

"She and Marion have important business elsewhere. Turks' Head, I suppose. I accused Marion of being afraid of getting her marcel wet and she was furious," Bobby giggled.

"I thought her hair was naturally curly!" exclaimed Joyce in surprise.

"It is. That's why she gets so furious when I call it a marcel, but I must have some revenge for my own straight locks." Bobby shook her thick, luxuriant hair from her eyes.

"Do you belong to a club?" Joyce asked Philo.

Philo shook her head in the negative.

"That's a terrible question to ask a girl?" Bobby informed Joyce. "Luckily it's Philo Cornish. She and Mary Taintor are the only

two girls in school strong-minded enough to refuse bids."

"How about yourself?" asked Joyce quickly.

Bobby made a face at her.

"I haven't been bid, yet. Goodness only knows what I'll do if I am. Race you to the end of the tank and back."

"It won't be long now," Philo Cornish lazily stroked them, keeping easily abreast of Joyce's strenuous best, "before practice will begin for the swimming-races."

"I thought they didn't come off until February, and it isn't Hallowe'en yet," said Bobby Howland.

"They come off in February, but the girls, the wise ones anyway, will begin to practise soon."

"I'm going to start to-morrow," said Joyce, enthusiastically.

"Why not to-day?" teased Bobby.

"Yes, come on," said Philo. "I'll show you a few of the stunts they pull."

So absorbed were the three girls in their swimming that they were nearly late for dinner, and had to rush at topmost speed in order to be ready when the gong sounded.

In the morning mail, a few days later, Joyce

received two notes; one bearing a New York postmark, the other that of Louisville. Glancing hurriedly through them both, she ran to find Patricia.

“Oh, Patricia, do listen! Here’s a letter from Sally Orcutt. She’s just as funny as ever.”

“What does she say?” Patricia was eager to know.

“She begins:

“‘Hello, Joyce. Aren’t you the lucky thing to be in New York with Patricia and that brother of yours? You know he is almost as nice as you.’

“Then she goes on to say that Granny Orcutt has taken a sudden notion to go up and see Lee Davis at Yale—”

“Is Lee Davis at Yale? I didn’t know that!” Patricia interrupted in surprise.

“Yes, he decided on Yale.”

“Why, Joyce Hunter! How did you know that?”

Joyce blushed a trifle.

“I hear from him occasionally.”

“Aha!” teased Patricia. “Wait till I tell Ray on you.”

“No can do.” Joyce laughed good-naturedly. “Ray knows all about it. Now will you listen to what Sally says?”

“I’m squelched!” admitted Patricia.

“Granny Orcutt has taken a notion to go see Lee Davis. Sally is wild to go, too, of course, but she can’t leave school; so Mrs. Davis is bringing Granny, and they may stay for a month or so. Sally hopes and thinks and prays that they will. In that case she, meaning Sally, is to be allowed to come up for the Yale-Princeton football game, and if she comes, she will stop here long enough to say ‘Hello’ to us. She sends heaps of love to you, and asks if you remember how you insulted Lee by mistaking him for a chauffeur.”

Joyce went off into gales of laughter at the memory, and Patricia joined her.

“She’s the lucky one!” Patricia sobered finally. “I’ve always longed to see a Yale-Princeton game, but I never have been able to do so.”

“I love football, too,” said Joyce, “but I’ve never seen anything but a local high-school game.”

“I’ve seen some big ones, and they are thrilling. I’ve always wanted to see a Yale-

Princeton. It's to be in the Yale Bowl this year, too. Lucky Sally!"

"Well, the other one is from Ray." Joyce unfolded the sheet covered with her brother's angular handwriting. "It's about going to the Howlands', for Hallowe'en."

"What does he say?" asked Patricia, eagerly. She, too, had been invited to the Howland party.

"He says," Joyce giggled, "that after several vain attempts over the 'phone, he finally decided to write me. Then he goes on:

"'I called the school, and that was busy. I called the Strickland home, and that was busy; then I asked Central in as plaintive a voice as I could assume if she had any numbers that weren't busy. I said I could use almost any of them. Of course, she got huffy, as I suppose she had a right to do; hence, this note.'

"'I'm not sure about the Howland party. I should like very much to go, but I'm not sure I can. There is a short trip ahead of me again, up to Springfield and New Haven. These trips about the country were something I hadn't counted on. I enjoy them immensely, except for the fact that I miss night-school while I'm away, but I find plenty of time to study.'"

“Dad says he’s doing marvellously,” interrupted Patricia.

“When does your dad sail?” asked Joyce suddenly.

“Not for two or three weeks. He isn’t sure himself. What else does Ray say?”

“That’s about all. If his trip doesn’t interfere, he’s going to the Howlands’. He ends his note: ‘Business first! Ray’.”

Patricia looked a bit disappointed.

“I suppose he’s right, but it won’t be any fun at the Howlands’ without Ray.”

Although Joyce vowed not to miss a single basket-ball practice, she missed the very next one. Her class in Appreciation of Art had advanced far enough, in the teacher’s opinion, for a trip to the Metropolitan Art Museum. Poor Joyce’s head reeled with unfamiliar, unpronounceable names: Cimabue, Giotto, Fra Filippo Lippi, Filippino Lippi—which was which. Which of the Lippis was the father, which the son?

Joyce never could remember until she ran across Browning’s delightful poem of “Fra Filippo Lippi”. She had been browsing around the school library during a spare half-hour. Catching sight of the name, Fra

Filippo Lippi, Joyce paused to investigate. Then, having started the poem, she found a comfortable chair and curled herself in it. Line by line she dissected the poem, chuckling over Browning's apt humor, reconstructing in her own mind the whole scene, helped greatly by her recent study of the artist's life. So interested did she become that she did not even hear the gong that summoned the Art class. Ten minutes later she came out of her trance, glanced at the clock, gasped, and fled to her class.

Miss Keating looked up in disapproval as Joyce entered.

"You are aware, are you not, Miss Hunter, that tardiness to class carries a penalty?"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Joyce, impulsively, "but I ran across a poem about Fra Filippo Lippi, and I got so interested reading it that I never even heard the gong."

Miss Keating looked at her in faint surprise.

"I'm always glad to know my pupils are interested. What was the poem?"

Although unable to recite the lines, Joyce gave the gist of the poem; how Fra Filippo Lippi was caught, a vagrant away from his work, and was surrounded by the watch, the

policemen of that day; how he defended himself; told how he became a monk at the age of ten, renouncing the world rather than lose a mouthful of bread; how his first efforts were drawn on the convent walls; how the minor monks admired his work, but the prior objected because the figures were too life-like and real. So spirited was Joyce's recital that the class, usually a languid one, picked up interest and listened.

"I'm glad you reminded me of that poem. I had forgotten it," said Miss Keating when Joyce had finished. "Girls, this is the sort of interest I like to see displayed. See how real Miss Hunter has made Fra Filippo Lippi seem. I think, under the circumstances, Miss Hunter, that I will overlook your tardiness, since you were really studying for this class, only see that it doesn't happen again."

Joyce sank into her seat with a sigh of thankfulness. She was trying so hard to have no tardy marks.

"And," continued Miss Keating, "that is just why I have planned this trip for Wednesday to the Art Museum. Remember, attendance at this trip is as compulsory as attendance at class. Illness is the only excuse. The time

will be different, of course. We shall leave here at three, next Wednesday. Every one remember that. And now, to continue our lesson. Miss Hall, you may tell us why the early artists drew such wooden, unnatural figures."

Wednesday whirled around all too quickly. Joyce presented herself at the appointed starting-place, despite the fact that the second basket-ball practice had been announced for that afternoon, and she would have much preferred to be there.

Joyce felt that she looked very well in her new street costume, but apparently her opinion was not shared by the other girls. They paired off in groups of two or three, leaving Joyce solitary. Holding her head high, pretending not to mind, Joyce caught up with Miss Keating, who was at the head of the procession.

"How are we going?" she asked.

"We will catch a cross-town bus over to the Avenue," said Miss Keating, "and then probably walk to the Museum."

Despite the fact that the other girls ignored her, Joyce enjoyed herself immensely. She climbed to the top of the heavy, ponderous bus, even though the air was chilly. The

other girls huddled inside, but Joyce, practically alone on top, breathed deeply of the invigorating air. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled, and she forgot the hurt she had felt at the attitude of the others. Below her was incessant movement,—cars whirling by, people hurrying along. Just across the aisle sat the only other occupant of the upper part of the bus, a woman, who was having a difficult time with a fractious small dog which refused to keep quiet, but barked and yapped and wiggled incessantly. So absorbed was Joyce in this small comedy that she jumped when a man loomed over her and wordlessly poked a metal instrument close to her face.

“O my gracious!” ejaculated Joyce. “I thought you were a hold-up man.” She looked up with a twinkle in her eyes.

“Fare, please!” The man’s face was as bored as his voice.

Flurried, Joyce hunted for a dime. She began to wonder if people in this great city has lost all sense of emotion. She wondered more when she heard the woman across the aisle talking to her dog.

“Any one would think it was a child!” thought Joyce, in disgust. “Goodness knows

I love Bingo,—we all do,—but we don't call him our Sweet Tootums! Oh, I'd like to see Timmie and Bobbie and Mother and Dad. If it wasn't for Ray, I'd turn around and *run right home.*"

But Joyce's wave of homesickness passed quickly. The Metropolitan Art Gallery filled her with awe and bewilderment. They did not stop on the ground floor, but ascended at once to view the pictures. As in a maze, Joyce wandered from room to room, trying to grasp Miss Keating's explanations of why this or that was art,—explanations of line, color, masses, balance, until Joyce's head whirled indeed. Few of the pictures appealed to her, and those she most admired, Miss Keating dismissed with a wave of her hand.

Unheeding, Joyce came to a full and complete stop before a large canvas. It was a picture of the sea, of wild, tumbling, blue waves. Joyce had never seen the ocean, but something in the wild free beauty of the picture struck a chord deep within her. Entranced, she stood gazing her fill. Suddenly she became aware of silence about her. She looked around quickly. The room where she stood was empty.

Panic-stricken, she fled through the first door, only to find no sign of Miss Keating or the girls. Door after door, room after room Joyce entered, becoming more and more alarmed. There was no sign of any familiar person, and she realized full well that she would never be able to find her way back to Miss Brent's. She was not versed in the art of taxicabbing. Where to find the bus, where to go, where to get off, were vague questions in her mind. What to do? She *must* find Miss Keating.

Joyce began to run now. She stopped suddenly when she realized that she was once more back before her picture of the boundless sea. She stopped long enough to shake her fist at it.

"All your fault!" she said, and then blushed, realizing that she had spoken aloud; realizing, too, that a man and a girl stood before the picture, as interested as she had been.

The girl whirled in surprise, and then the surprise was mutual.

"Joyce!"

"Why, Mary Taintor! How do you happen to be here?"

"I told you I was coming. Don't you remember?"

"I'd forgotten," Joyce looked shamefaced.

"You know Dad? About once a week we come over here, and I have a dreadful time dragging him past this picture."

Joyce smiled at Mr. Taintor.

"You don't seem to be dragging very hard."

He was a tall man, splendidly built, with hair a little more than grey at the temples, very distinguished-looking.

"Mary is an indulgent daughter," he said. "This is Joyce Hunter, isn't it?"

Joyce's eyes suddenly misted. Although this man was entirely unlike her father, he made her think of him. For the second time that day a wave of homesickness swept over Joyce. Although Mr. Taintor appeared not to notice, he turned quickly to Mary.

"Couldn't Miss Joyce join us? Your mother will be waiting for us. We really should go on."

"Oh, Joyce," Mary's eyes danced, "that would be perfect. Mother, Dad, and I are going down-town to dinner and on to a very special concert given by a friend of his. Would you care to come?"

"I'd love to." Some of the homesick longing in Joyce's heart crept into her voice.

“You two wait here. I’ll dash off and find a ’phone some place. I’ll ask Miss Brent herself if you may.”

Mary was gone, leaving a rather shy Joyce behind. But that shyness wore off very quickly under Mr. Taintor’s kindness. They wandered about, gazing at pictures haphazardly, and Joyce was now as interested as earlier she had been bored. Mr. Taintor had the knack of sensing the artist’s intentions and feelings, and conveying those feelings to Joyce. Now and again he brought in little anecdotes of the artists’ lives, or occasionally experiences from his own extensive travels. It seemed no time at all before a breathless Mary was back with them.

“I didn’t mean to be so long. She says you may, Joyce. We’ll have to hurry. We’re late now. Mother never likes to wait.”

The message was given breathlessly, and it was slightly confused, but entirely satisfactory.

“Oh,” Joyce paused. “Do I look well enough to go to a concert?”

“Bless your heart! You look good to me!” Mary gave her arm a little squeeze. “It’s a very informal affair, anyway.”

CHAPTER XI

HALLOWE'EN

THERE was certainly disappointment ahead for Patricia. Always before she had attended Miss Brent's as a day pupil, and she had forgotten that attendance at the Hallowe'en party given by the school was absolutely compulsory for the girls who boarded. It was one of the big affairs of the school year. Miss Brent opened her own private home to the girls, and every one was expected to attend out of courtesy. For the day girls there was sometimes an excuse to be absent, but for the boarding pupils there was no excuse.

The night before Hallowe'en Joyce rushed into her room to find Marion and Bobby Howland, Frances Evans, and Patricia holding an indignation meeting.

"This school makes me sick!" Marion's voice was petulant. "I'm not even to be allowed to go to my own home. Feature that! And we close the house Monday. It's utterly ridiculous. I told Miss Hodges so!"

“Marion!” mocked Bobby. “You’re a regular hero-ine. I never knew you were so brave. What did Hodge-Podge say?”

Marion flushed.

“Well, of course, I wasn’t rude enough to say it exactly like that. I told her I was very much disappointed, that Mother had planned on having us, that there was to be quite a house-party.”

“Oh,” interrupted Bobby, “that’s different. I know what reply Miss Hodges made to that!”

“What, Miss Smarty?” Marion was angry.

Bobby jumped to her feet, assuming a pose exactly like Miss Hodges’ usual one.

“My dear girl, you realize that loyalty to your school is the first essential. Aside from that, this is at Miss Brent’s own home. Surely you wouldn’t be rude enough to refuse *her*? I’m sure your mother would want you to go to Miss Brent’s. Your house-party can easily be postponed until some other time.”

Airily she waved her hand, dismissing Marion’s plans and Marion’s mother’s plans as nothing at all.

“Bobby, you goose!” Patricia laughed

merrily. "I can just see Miss Hodges saying it. So I imagine there will be no week-end with the Howlands. No one is more disappointed than I am."

"Yes, there is." Frances Evans was petulant. "We'd made such plans, hadn't we, Marion?"

"Yes, of course." Marion looked worried. "I don't know how I'm going to arrange—"

"Tell little sister," teased Bobby. "She's the best little arranger in town."

"Well," Marion hesitated, "Roy Walker promised to meet us. We were going to drive out with him in his new roadster, and—"

"Leave the rest of us to get there as best we might. So sweet of you, sister dear."

"You've always been able to take care of yourself!" snapped Marion.

"And always shall be, thank you. If Roy Walker is mixed up in this, I resign."

"Thank you," said Marion. "That's a relief."

Bobby made a face at her sister.

"And as far as I can see, Marion, *you* might as well resign, too. You'll simply have to be present at Miss Brent's."

Marion raised her eyebrows.

“I have no intention of being present at Miss Brent’s, nor has Fran. How about you, Patricia?”

Patricia hesitated, looked uncomfortable.

“Joyce,” said Bobby, “you and I will have to keep up the family reputation. There goes that gong again! Come on, every one.”

Joyce was bursting to ask Patricia what Marion had meant by her last remark, but Patricia had assumed one of her lofty attitudes, and Joyce, wisely, kept silent.

She discovered, however, at least an inkling of the plan the next afternoon. Both Marion Howland and Fran Evans were suddenly ill—ill enough to go to bed.

“They must have eaten something that disagreed with them,” said Patricia, smiling wryly.

“Didn’t it disagree with you, too?” asked Joyce.

“Strange as it may seem, it didn’t.”

Joyce smiled at her in relief.

“Then you’ll be able to go to Miss Brent’s?”

“Quite able—worse luck!”

“Isn’t it fun? At Miss Brent’s?”

“Oh, yes,” Patricia answered, “it’s a nice party. These Hallowe’en affairs are always

delightful, but I did want very much to go to the Howlands'. It's always such a lark. Things are bound to happen there. Ray is going out with Roy Walker and the girls isn't he?"

"Oh, no! Didn't I tell you?" Joyce was surprised. "Ray 'phoned me late last night. I thought I told you."

"What did he say?" Patricia's spirits suddenly rose.

"He said," giggled Joyce, "that he was *overcame*."

"Why?" Patricia giggled, too, at Ray's intentional misuse of the word.

"He got me on the 'phone so easily and so quickly that he was speechless."

"Goose!" ejaculated Patricia.

"Isn't he? Then he grew sensible and told me that he had to take that trip to Springfield. He wouldn't be back until Monday or Tuesday, so he couldn't go to the Howlands'. He was so disappointed, but when I told him that neither you nor I nor Bobby was going, either, he seemed quite cheered. Oh, *quite*. I thought I had told you last night, but evidently I was too sleepy to mention it."

“Ray is mighty nice to you,” said Patricia thoughtfully.

“He’s a dear,” admitted Joyce. “If I ever do fall in love, it will have to be some one just like Ray. What are you going to wear to-night?”

“Oh!” Patricia came suddenly out of a trance. “I don’t know. What are you? Let’s look them over.”

Even as Patricia said, the party at Miss Brent’s was delightful. Miss Brent still lived in the home of her ancestors, an old-fashioned brick mansion, far below the present residential district. The school was well uptown, and Miss Brent lived there except on weekends, when she always returned to the brick house. There lived with her three old maiden aunts, as dainty and sweet and frilly as though they had stepped out of some old novel. These three little old ladies looked forward to the Hallowe’en party each year as the big event of the season, second in importance only to New Year. On New Year’s Day they still retained the custom of keeping open house to their friends, and friends’ children, a sadly diminishing crowd these later years. But Hallowe’en was always sprightly, glad-

dened by the presence of so many young girls.

"So fresh and pretty," said one of the old ladies, smiling upon Joyce and Bobby as they entered.

"'Fresh' is the word," whispered irrepressible Bobby.

The house, despite its solid old furniture and formal arrangement, was gayly decorated in the usual Hallowe'en colors of black and yellow. Miss Brent was a charming hostess, and graciously called each girl by name as she entered, nor, in order to do this, did she need the prompting of Miss Hodges, who stood at her side. Up the winding stairs to quaint rooms on the upper floor, to lay off their wraps, went Joyce and Bobby and Patricia.

"I felt like a hypocrite," said Joyce in a low tone to Patricia, "when Miss Brent spoke of Marion and Frances being so ill."

A little frown appeared on Patricia's brow.

"I know. I think she did it intentionally. You look darling in that gown, Joyce."

Joyce flushed with pleasure.

"Do you really like it, Patricia?"

"It suits you. Where has Bobby gone?"

They found Bobby standing entranced

before a genuine, old-fashioned spinning-wheel, made of gleaming wood, the thread in place as though for immediate use.

"Oh," sighed Bobby, coming out of her reverie when the girls spoke to her, "isn't that the most perfect piece? I think in some former reincarnation I was a demure little Colonial maid."

"That accounts for it," said Patricia, in a tone of having many mysteries at last explained.

"Accounts for what?" Bobby looked puzzled.

"Why," Patricia teased, "no doubt, when you were a dear little demure maid in Colonial times, your instincts were all so repressed that you had to come back as a tomboy. I've often wondered. You're so different from Marion."

Bobby's eyes twinkled.

"To be absolutely honest, I think Maid Marion has more to do with my present inclinations toward tomboyishness than any Colonial maid."

"How?"

"Oh, she has always been so everlastingly proper *in some ways* that it gets on my

nerves. I want to be just as much opposite as possible.”

“Has the gong rung yet?” Joyce looked around, a worried look in her eyes.

The other two girls laughed.

““He’s sure to git you if you don’t watch out’,” teased Bobby. “This is a party without gongs, but it is time to go down. Come along.”

The party was charming and delightful, but Joyce sadly missed the care-free, spontaneous joy of the parties she was used to. These girls were all so formal, so well-behaved, their laughter so controlled. Joyce thought longingly for a moment of the Hallowe’en party a year ago; the party which Patricia nearly missed, a party made up of impromptu games, home-made costumes, hilarity—and doughnuts. Undoubtedly the refreshments here would be dainty, perfect, in accordance with the rest of the party. But Joyce was never to know—for she neither saw nor tasted them.

She and Bobby had chosen each other as partners for the Torturous Way. The Way led up-stairs and down-stairs, across a darkened cellar, the only light a candle carried by

the girls. At the end of the Way there was a pumpkin filled with Fortunes. Each girl drew forth her own. They were elaborate affairs, those Fortunes, contained, with a gay paper cap, inside a long, tinselled cylinder.

It was a creepy business, finding your way back through the dark of a strange house, past half-opened doors, past ghostly draped, unreal figures. Bobby was in her element.

“I didn’t know this party would be so much fun. I don’t envy Marion and Fran a bit.”

“Just what do they plan to do?” asked Joyce, curiously.

“Mother decided to give up the idea of the house-party as long as so many of us couldn’t come, but Marion was so angry by then, that she said she was going to keep her date, anyway. She and Fran plan to sneak out and meet Roy Walker and your brother. The four of them were going somewhere to dance. I suppose I should have babbled, but as long as Raoul, your brother, was along—”

“But Bobby,” gasped Joyce, “Ray isn’t with them.”

Bobby grasped her wrist so quickly and so

sharply that Joyce let forth a little frightened shriek.

"What did you see?" asked Joyce.

"See? I didn't see anything. I heard something. Are you sure Ray isn't going to be there?"

"Absolutely. He left for Springfield early this morning."

"And those two light-headed ones out alone with that Roy Walker. Golly!" ejaculated Bobby. "We've got to do something. Joyce. I wouldn't trust Roy Walker as far as I can throw a piano."

"What can we do?" Joyce was frightened.

Bobby stood still for a minute, thinking fast.

"First of all, we've got to go on and get those fool Fortunes. Then we'll go back and be seen, especially by Miss Hodges. After that we'll have to take a chance and sneak out. Will you come with me?"

"Of course," said Joyce, thinking not at all of the consequences to herself.

In half an hour she and Bobby were out on the street.

"Where do we go now?" Joyce's teeth chattered as much from excitement as from cold.

"I don't know." Bobby looked worried. "I don't think we were very clever. I'm sure Miss Hodges saw us leaving, but it can't be helped now. Here! Taxi!"

Following the shortest course of action, the girls rushed back to the school. They hurried to Marion's room, to find it, as they expected—empty! Bobby groaned.

"But Marion is older than you," Joyce tried to comfort her friend.

"She may be older, but she has a lot less sense. This proves it."

"Surely she has been out alone before."

"Never like this. And with that Roy Walker. He's a—I don't like him. What shall I do?" The usually competent Bobby stood irresolute. "I can't ask help of the school. If Marion ever gets found out—O dear!"

"Maybe she's in Fran Evans' room," suggested Joyce. "I saw a light there as we came in."

Marion was not there, but Frances was, a sulky Frances.

"Where's Marion?" demanded Bobby, out of breath.

"She and Roy Walker went down to the Village."

"Why didn't you go?"

"Three's a crowd," sulked Fran Evans, "especially with Roy Walker."

"Where'd they go? When did they leave?"

Fran looked witheringly at Bobby but she answered her.

"They left about half an hour ago. They were going to start at the Purple Pig, I think. From there—I don't know."

Bobby whirled Joyce from the room.

"Where are we going? What are you going to do?" asked Joyce of an intent Bobby as the taxi sped along with them once more.

"We're going to the Purple Pig."

"Whatever that is," said Joyce.

"Oh, it's a Bohemian place, nothing but a cheap restaurant, really, in the artist district, but, of course, Marion would think it smart to go there."

"What do you plan to do when you get there?"

"I don't know. Drag her home somehow."

"'Father, dear father, come home with me now'," quoted Joyce, unable to refrain from teasing a little, despite her friend's anxiety.

The Purple Pig was a small basement room, containing three or four long, board tables.

Upon the whitewashed walls galloped a whole drove of pigs, furiously purple. The place was crowded with queer-looking men and women, and dense with smoke. Happily for Bobby's peace of mind, almost the first persons she saw were Marion and Roy Walker, seated at a small table near the door. Joyce stood waiting for Bobby while she dashed over to Marion. Joyce could not hear what was said, but apparently the conversation was not a pleasant one. Finally, however, Marion arose with a flounce followed reluctantly by Roy Walker. A breathless Bobby dashed up to Joyce.

"Come on. They're going back to school in his car. I hope the taxi waited. I'm going to follow them. I don't trust Roy Walker."

Bobby was as good as her word. Luckily the taxi was still waiting. It was a wild ride. Very apparently Roy Walker was determined to shake off the following taxi, and just as determinedly Bobby would not be shaken. She urged the driver on, promising him all sorts of rewards. Up the Avenue they careened, Joyce gasping for breath more than once as they shot by other cars;

into the Park, around curves, and out again, Roy Walker's tail-light never more than half a block ahead of them. Finally, Joyce sighed with relief. They turned into the right street and stopped before the school.

A furious Marion ran from the car up the steps and into the school ahead of the other two girls. Bobby stopped long enough to pay the taxi-driver and give him the promised ten-dollar tip, and then she, too, started up the steps.

"Aren't we going back to the party?" asked Joyce in a faint voice.

"No; it's too late now." Bobby glanced at her watch. "They'll be leaving before long. We couldn't get back. We'd better stay here and hope they didn't miss us."

"What shall we tell them?" Joyce asked, as she followed Bobby through the door and into the elevator.

"Tell them nothing, since we can't tell them the truth. I hope I haven't got you into trouble, Joyce. You're such a dear."

"How about yourself?"

"Oh, I'm always in scrapes. Really, I've grown accustomed to the sensation. It will work out some way."

On this optimistic note Bobby left Joyce at her door. Joyce entered the dimly-lighted room and sank into a comfortable chair to ponder. Faintly she could hear the voices of the two sisters, in the next room. Would she be in trouble? She had done nothing except to help Bobby help Marion. She wouldn't explain, though. That would cause trouble for Marion, and Bobby had asked her to keep quiet. Perhaps they'd never be missed from the party.

With that hope in her heart, Joyce undressed and climbed into bed. But the hope was instantly dispelled when Patricia came in some three quarters of an hour later.

"Whatever happened, Joyce? I'm afraid you're going to get into a heap of trouble." Patricia was half-curious, half-cross.

"Why?" Joyce was frightened.

"I think Hodge-Podge was suspicious that there was something in the air. Instead of serving refreshments as they always do, like a tea, they had individual artificial pumpkins, filled with really the daintiest lunch. As each girl's name was called, she walked up and got her pumpkin—just like school! I don't think Miss Brent liked it,

and I don't think it had been planned that way. Anyhow, you and Bobby were startlingly conspicuous by your absence. Wherever did you go?"

Briefly Joyce told of their escapade. The worried look deepened on Patricia's brow.

"Hodge-Podge had an inkling, I'm sure. I do hope Bobby hasn't gotten you into trouble."

"It wasn't Bobby, it was Marion," said Joyce, stanchly.

Long after Patricia was sleeping peacefully, Joyce lay wondering whether she had done the right thing or not. She could not have deserted Bobby when Bobby needed her, Bobby who had always been her friend. But could she make Miss Hodges understand? Especially—she sighed—since she was pledged to silence regarding her whereabouts.

CHAPTER XII

IN TROUBLE

JOYCE'S worst fears were confirmed early Monday morning. Sunday had gone by normally. The girls had arisen, had attended chapel, and had eaten heartily of the special Sunday dinner of fried chicken and meringue pie. After dinner Patricia and Joyce had gone to their room, planning a few quiet hours of reading and writing letters. Scarcely had they settled comfortably, however, when there was a rap on the door. Joyce's heart leaped, but she opened the door calmly enough. Fran Evans entered.

"Oh, Patricia," she asked pointedly, "can you come to my room for a little while? Isobel and Nancy Stevens are there. Gladys Hemingway had a date, but if you can come—"

"Turk's Head?" asked Patricia.

Fran Evans nodded, entirely ignoring Joyce.

"You know bids go out the end of this week."

"All right." Patricia, looking bored, got up. "I'll be back soon, Joyce."

The two girls went out, leaving behind a restless Joyce. Bobby and Marion Howland had gone home for Sunday afternoon and evening; Mary Taintor was with her mother and father. Joyce stood at her window, looking down into the tiny bit of yard the school boasted. She thought of Irma and her friends before a roaring great fire in the big, shabby, homey room of the Hunter house. Joyce could imagine the hilarity and laughter, could almost hear the banging of the old tinny piano.

“O dear!” she sighed; “and I’ll not see any of them until way next summer. I just know Bobbie and Timmie and Bingo are having a romp in the middle of the room. Mother is likely sitting in her favorite chair, saying, ‘Now, boys, not too rough!’ Irma and Miss Laurence will be there, or else will soon be coming in with some of the boys. And Irma thinks I’m lucky! Dad will likely be pacing the floor restlessly, thinking of me. Dear old Dad! I do wish Ray was in town. I think—I think I’m going to be homesick.”

Joyce bravely winked back the tears.

“This will never do. I’m going for a walk.”

She paused on the threshold, remembering suddenly that walking alone was proscribed.

Two girls together might walk within certain districts, but not one alone. Whom could she ask? Philo Cornish!

Philo was alone and glad to go. Since she was a senior, she had extra privileges. Together, she and Joyce walked over to Riverside Drive and up that street nearly to Grant's Tomb. Joyce's spirits rose to their normally gay level. Walking with Philo, scuffling in the few stray leaves, breathing the sharp fall air, watching the people promenading, glimpsing the boats below on the Hudson, all brought the color to Joyce's cheeks, the sparkle to her eyes, and contentment to her heart. Philo was a splendid friend. She was an individualist, a girl with ideas of her own which she did not hesitate to express. Although she was two years older than Joyce, they had much in common. And when they climbed atop a bus to return to school in the early dusk, with lights beginning to twinkle all about, Joyce felt the day was complete.

She came singing into her room, to find again that dread pink slip reposing on her desk.

"Miss Joyce Hunter will report at Miss Hodges' office at nine o'clock Monday morning."

Just that! Nothing more. Joyce sat down abruptly. The last time she had received such a slip she had been mystified, but this time she thought she knew what was ahead of her.

Bobby received one, too, and came in after hours, to consult Joyce.

"My gracious!" gasped Joyce. "You'd better get back to your room, Bobby. If we're caught again, we'll be in deeper than ever."

"I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, as my Aunt Arabella used to say," whispered Bobby. "I just had to know if you got one of these, too."

"I did," Joyce whispered back.

"Old Hodge-Podge isn't so slow. The old fox! I didn't think she'd miss us."

"Patricia said she had the lunch served so she could catch us."

Bobby looked worried.

"I don't mind about myself, but I hate to get you into trouble, Joycie."

"What will she do to us?" asked Joyce.

"I don't know.— Ask us a lot of questions, for one thing."

"Which we can't answer," supplemented Joyce.

“You could answer them, Joyce.”

“But I won’t. You know that, Bobby.”

“Bless your heart, of course I know it; therefore, I’m worried. If only Marion had half my sense! Well—what’s done is done. We’ll have to make the best of it.”

Miss Hodges was more than severe on Monday morning when Joyce and Bobby presented themselves in her office promptly at nine o’clock. She gazed from one girl to the other, her lips puckered into a disagreeable little smile.

“You girls did not enjoy Miss Brent’s party?” Her voice was sweetly acid.

Joyce felt a slow blush rising in her cheeks and said nothing, but Bobby was entirely unperturbed.

“Oh, yes, we thought it delightful.” Her smile was disarming.

Miss Hodges looked at her sharply.

“Then why didn’t you stay until it was over?”

“We—I had urgent business elsewhere.”

“It must have been very urgent indeed! Not only were your actions extremely rude, but they were absolutely against all rules of the school.”

“Why?” asked Bobby innocently. “We were here long before the other girls arrived from the party.”

Miss Hodges looked at Bobby with a withering stare.

“It is to be regretted, Miss Roberta Howland, that you are not more like your sister, Marion. Poor Marion was unable to go to Miss Brent’s, but she sent us flowers and such a sweet little note of apology.”

“But Miss Hodges,—” Joyce began impulsively and then stopped abruptly, realizing that to defend Bobby, she would have to explain everything that had happened, and that that was the one thing which Bobby did not wish. The remark had one result, however. It drew Miss Hodges’ withering look to Joyce.

“Yes, Miss Hunter. You have something to say?”

Joyce shook her head miserably.

“This is *your* second offense. Miss Brent was much too lenient the first time, I have always felt. However, before I impose sentence, if either of you girls have any explanation to make, I shall be glad to hear it.”

Joyce looked at Bobby and Bobby looked at Joyce, but neither of them uttered a word.

“Very well,” Miss Hodges’ voice was covered with ice, “since you do not deem it advisable to apologize or explain, I shall have to give severe punishments. Miss Roberta Howland is to be deprived of all privileges for the next month.”

Bobby went a little white. The postponed house-party was to be the following Saturday and Sunday. Mrs. Howland had kept the house open for that express purpose.

“I feel that I am being lenient in this case, Roberta,” Miss Hodges went on, “but this is your first offense, and you are a sister of Marion’s. Marion has always stood well in this school. As to Miss Hunter,” she turned to Joyce, who quaked inwardly, “since this is her second offense in less than a month, she will be deprived of privileges for six weeks, and her name entered in the red book. You may both go now.”

“What is the red book?” whispered Joyce, as soon as they were in the hall.

“Oh, a pet idea of Hodge-Podge’s.” Bobby was disgusted. “She keeps a record there of the girls *she* thinks need watching. Marion should have been there ages ago, but Marion’s too clever for that. I’m sorry, Joycie.”

"Pooh!" Joyce sounded happier than she felt. "Time flies quickly. I have no special plans for the next six weeks, anyway."

"I had," said Bobby, ruefully. "However, it might have been worse."

The week had started badly for Joyce, and so it continued. On Wednesday morning there was subdued excitement among the girls, much running back and forth along the halls, much forming in groups, several squeals of glee, and some unexpected kisses.

"What is it all about?" she asked Philo Cornish as they left the breakfast-table together.

"Bids are out," Philo sounded bored.

"Bids are out?" repeated Joyce. "Just what does that mean?"

Philo looked at her quickly.

"I take it you didn't get one. I thought you surely would on account of Patricia Strickland. The clubs have invited in their new members, therefore all the rejoicing. Stuff and nonsense, I call it. Makes a few of the snobs more snobbish, and the rest of us—" Philo shrugged her shoulders.

Joyce felt a queer little stab of pain in her heart. She hadn't expected a bid to Turk's

Head, and yet—and yet—She was suddenly grateful to Philo Cornish for the stand she had taken,—Philo who had been bid to at least two of the clubs and refused; and to Mary Taintor who could enter any one of the four at any time—and refused them all.

Joyce went soberly to her room, but matters were no better there. Patricia was in one of her difficult moods.

“Were you bid?” she asked abruptly.

Joyce shook her head.

Patricia set her lips in a firm line, tossed her head in her old imperious manner, and left the room without further speech.

Even Bobby Howland failed her this morning. Joyce sought Bobby in her own room, but Marion answered her rap on the door. She glared at Joyce.

“Is there something you wish?”

“I—I’d like to see Bobby,” Joyce was feeling extremely subdued.

“Bobby’s busy!” snapped Marion.

At just that instant Bobby’s face appeared over her sister’s shoulder. Joyce had never seen Bobby so flushed and angry.

“I’m sorry, Joyce,” her words were crisp; “I’ll see you later.”

Disconsolate, Joyce turned away. Routine however, was not disturbed by bids, by heart-ache, or elation. That ceaseless tyrant, the gong, rang through the house. Joyce was rather glad of classes that morning, despite the fact that there was much whispering among the girls, and still much of the subdued excitement to be felt in the air.

When she ran to her room at noon to refresh herself before lunch, she found three letters waiting for her. She stuffed them hastily into her pocket and went down to the dining-room. Here she found more consolation. Sticky buns! A plateful of these delicious buns stood in the middle of the table, and Joyce ate her fill.

During the short period after lunch, before the afternoon class, the girls usually gathered in groups or strolled about in couples, discussing lessons, plans, various topics of interest. That was all spoiled to-day. The girls who were lucky enough to have received bids rushed together, leaving a disconsolate but bravely-laughing group on the outside, a group which pretended to be gay, but which quickly disintegrated and disappeared. Joyce, already over her first pangs of disappointment,

sought one of the small reception-rooms and opened her letters.

The first one was from home, a sort of round-robin affair, in which Bobbie and Timmie as well as Mr. and Mrs. Hunter had a word to say. Joyce read each page lingeringly, hating to come to the end, and leaving it out of the envelope in case she should have time to re-read it.

The next was a note from Sally Orcutt. The first few words banished every vestige of heartache left in Joyce.

Sally began in her characteristically impulsive fashion:

“JOYCE DARLING: Granny Orcutt *is* going to stay in New Haven, and Dr. Orcutt says I may go up for the big game. But that isn't the best of it. Lee wired me just this morning that he had four extra tickets! Four! That means that you and Patricia just must go. Perhaps your brother Raoul would come, too. He *is* almost as nice as you, Joyce. No doubt, Patricia knows some one else she'd like to ask. I'm so excited I just can't write any more. I'll see you in less than two weeks.

“SALLY”

“P. S. Lee said he would write you.

“S. O.”

Joyce sat up at a tingle with excitement.

"Then this must be from Lee Davis," she spoke aloud, although she was alone.

The last letter was from Lee Davis, but Joyce had no more than hastily scanned the first page when the gong rang.

"O dear!" Joyce hastily gathered up her three letters and started. "I wonder where Patricia is."

She looked hurriedly into two or three rooms, but did not find her room-mate. She wasted so much time that she was in danger of being tardy, and when she did meet Patricia opportunely in the hall, she had only time to thrust Sally's note into her hand and run on without explanation.

Joyce rushed back to her room after her afternoon classes, expecting to find an elated Patricia. Instead, she found her in a mood she had not seen her in for many a day. Patricia was haughty and Patricia was angry.

"Why, Patricia!" gasped Joyce. "What is wrong? I thought you'd be so pleased over Sally's letter."

"Pleased!" Patricia whirled on her. "You seem to have forgotten something, Joyce."

"What?" Joyce was mystified.

“Your six weeks won’t be up until nearly the middle of December.”

Joyce sat down suddenly.

“I’d forgotten all about *that*.”

“I thought so,” Patricia was furious. “Now you’ll have to miss the Yale-Princeton game, an opportunity you don’t have every day in the week. Ray won’t go without you; and I won’t go unless you two do—and all on account of Marion Howland. She makes me sick! Why can’t she stand up and take her own blame on her own shoulders? I have a notion to tell Miss Hodges the truth.”

“Oh, no, don’t Patricia,” begged Joyce.

But Patricia would make no promises, and she was still in a flaming mood when she left that evening for Fran Evans’ room where Turk’s Head was holding a meeting.

The first meeting of a club after bids were accepted was generally a jubilant one. It was one of the evenings in the year when they were *allowed* to have refreshments; new members always added zest; and plans were made for the year. To-night, however, Turk’s Head was anything but jubilant. Not only was Patricia angry, but Marion Howland was petulant, and Bobby was silent. Fran

Evans, Gladys Heminway, Isobel and Nancy Stevens all had a forced air of gayety about them. The new members looked rather frightened and nervous, except Helen Trowbridge, who simpered up to Patricia when she entered.

"It was so sweet of you girls to invite me into your club," she said.

Patricia glowered at her. She had consistently voted against Helen Trowbridge and had been as consistently overruled. The girl's words acted as a torch to Patricia's already flaming anger.

"How did it happen that Joyce Hunter didn't get a bid?" She flared at Fran Evans, the president.

"Why, Patricia," Fran looked slightly frightened, "you know the last time we voted, Glad wasn't here. Her vote decided against Joyce."

"I don't think she *should* belong," this from Helen Trowbridge. "She'd never be a credit to the club."

Patricia whirled on her, scathing remarks burning on her tongue.

"You would say that!" she managed at last.

Fran Evans went at once to Helen Trowbridge's defense.

"Joyce isn't one of us, Patricia. Perhaps you like her, but she doesn't dress well, and hasn't any money or standing that *we* know of. I can't see why—"

"I can," Bobby Howland spoke up. "Joyce Hunter is one of the finest girls in this school."

"Hush, Bobby!" Marion glared at her sister.

"I won't hush." Bobby was on her feet. "I can see there's been some dirty work here against Joyce. I haven't wanted to come into this old club, anyway, but for Marion's sake, and for Patricia's, too, I said I would. But now I won't. I see the kind you are, and you make me sick! If Joyce isn't coming in, I'm not, either."

She started for the door, but stopped as the voices of Fran Evans and Marion both reached her.

"Please, Bobby," begged Marion, miserably.

"Wait a few moments," said Fran Evans; "let's straighten this out."

"There is nothing to straighten," Patricia was still desperately angry. "I can see how you work. It was between Joyce and Helen

Trowbridge here. Gladys was indifferent as to who came in. I've heard her say so a dozen times. It is plain to be seen that you, Fran Evans, and likely Marion Howland—" Patricia took a wild shot and it went home—"talked Gladys into voting for Helen. All right! Have Helen Trowbridge. I'm done. I always did hate underhanded methods. Which brings to my mind another slightly more personal matter." She whirled on Marion Howland. "Joyce has a chance to go to the Yale-Princeton game. Thanks to your duplicity, she will not be given permission."

"How am I to blame?" Marion's voice was plaintive.

"Joyce and Bobby have been deprived of privileges, and it's all your fault."

"I don't see how," insisted Marion.

"You must be blind, then," flamed Patricia. "And I give you fair warning, Marion, if you don't tell Miss Hodges the truth by to-morrow noon, I shall!"

Marion looked sulky.

"You're so different from what you used to be, Patricia," she wailed. "You've never been like yourself since you went West."

“Thanks for the compliment,” said Patricia, in ringing tones. “And I shall continue to be different. If you wish proof of that, I hereby give it. I tender my resignation to the Turk’s Head Club, to take effect at once.”

She whirled to leave, and met the approving glance of Bobby Howland.

“Good for you, Patricia! I wasn’t sure you had it in you. Wait! I’m coming with you.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE YALE-PRINCETON GAME

THE excitement the following day was much greater than it had been on the previous one. The story of Patricia's withdrawal from Turk's Head, and Bobby Howland's refusal to join that same club, ran like peat-fire through the school. Peat-fire, as every one knows, is an underground fire that spreads rapidly, burns long and fiercely, although the surface of things is unchanged. Even so, did the tale of Patricia's and Marion's quarrel spread. The school promptly divided itself into two factions, by far the larger share being on Marion's side. But many loyal friends, headed by Mary Taintor and Philo Cornish, stood by Patricia.

One good result came of the affair, however. Marion, fearing Patricia would carry out her threat, confessed to Miss Hodges that Bobby had been absent from the Hallowe'en party out of concern for her.

"Why didn't Roberta tell me that that was her reason?" asked Miss Hodges.

Marion shrugged.

“She’s a queer child, is Roberta; very close-mouthed about so many things,” Marion’s voice grew sweetly plaintive. “I would have come down with her when you called her in on Monday, but she never breathed a word of it to me until yesterday.”

“That was very commendable of you, Marion,” Miss Hodges beamed. “I had forgotten you were ill that night. I shall lift Roberta’s punishment, at once.”

“So kind of you,” murmured Marion.

Miss Hodges frowned suddenly.

“I can scarcely see, however, why it was necessary for Joyce Hunter to accompany Roberta.”

Marion wriggled. She knew that unless she got Joyce out of the scrape, too, that Patricia would divulge the whole truth.

“Bobby’s fault, again, Miss Hodges. She is a conscientious child, really. She said she thought that by bringing Joyce with her, she would avoid being imprudent, a sort of chaperon, as it were.”

Miss Hodges still frowned.

“Both the girls, Joyce Hunter, especially, should have reported to me before they left

Miss Brent's home. There is really no excuse for Joyce."

Marion was growing uncomfortable. She felt compelled to go to Joyce's defense.

"She was really trying to help Bobby, I believe. She is still quite ignorant, of course, of many of our ways."

Miss Hodges tapped the desk with her pencil.

"Well, since you have offered this explanation, Marion, I feel compelled to remove the punishment, although I am reluctant to do so. Once before, Joyce Hunter was deprived of her privileges for disobeying the rules. However, we have no desire to be unjust. I shall speak to Roberta and to Joyce."

Marion sighed a sigh of relief, which Miss Hodges entirely misread.

Instead of Joyce's forgiveness being a sugar-coated pill, it was very much the other way around. The sweet part, the lifting of the ban, was completely surrounded and smothered by a lecture which Miss Hodges gave the two girls on disobedience. Speechless they listened, and speechless they left the office, but once in the privacy of Joyce's room they shed the reproofs, remembered

only that they were once again free, and performed a wild war-dance. Patricia coming in unexpectedly, found them at it.

“Whatever are you doing?” she asked.

“We’re pardoned,” giggled Joyce, stopping, breathless.

“At the eleventh hour,” Bobby struck an attitude. “Now we needn’t hang! And Marion has saved her soul!”

“Thank goodness!”

“Why?”

“Now I’ll not have to tell Miss Hodges the whole affair. I hated to do it, but I intended to.”

“No, Marion went down herself this morning.”

“For how long has she lost her privileges?” Patricia still looked worried.

Bobby laughed derisively.

“Patricia, you’re a babe-in-arms. You certainly don’t know Marion as well as I do.”

“What do you mean?” asked Patricia.

“I mean that when Marion chooses, she can be as sweet and as—as—” Bobby paused “—as you’d expect a sister of mine to be,” she finished, impishly.

“Well, if she was so sweet and dear, how did she escape punishment?”

“She wasn't. Certain girls act like poison in Marion's blood. Fran Evans always has that effect on her, and now this sweet, cooing Helen Trowbridge is as bad, if not worse. Marion lost no privileges. She patted Miss Hodges on the back with one hand, smoothed matters calmly out with the other, and had Hodge-Podge eating out of her hand in the meantime. My metaphor is a bit mixed, or else Marion has an extra hand somewhere, but you understand what I mean. You or I would have banged in, told the simple truth, and been in wrong forever, but Marion—”

“Well, at least, you're free to go to the game, Joyce,” said Patricia with a relieved sigh.

Patricia wisely applied directly to Miss Brent for permission for Joyce and herself to go to the Yale-Princeton game, and had no trouble getting it.

Great preparations were made for that day. Patricia, knowing well that a November football game was likely to be a chilly one, had her fur coat taken out of storage. Joyce went around collecting sweaters and mittens, but the night before the eventful day, Bobby,

smothered in a beautiful, soft coat, appeared in Joyce's room, dropped the coat, and started for the door.

"Wait!" gasped Joyce. "You forgot your coat."

"Oh, no, I didn't. Think I'm going to let you catch cold and then have to nurse you?" Bobby grinned broadly.

"You mean me to wear it to-morrow?" Joyce was astonished.

"Of course, silly. I'm just about as tall as you, and—"

"Bobby, you darling!" Joyce gave her a bear hug. "But I shouldn't really."

"Don't be absurd! That small blue hat of yours will be stunning with it." Bobby whirled suddenly back into the room. "Let's try it on."

Stunning indeed was Joyce as she snuggled into the luxurious coat.

"But, really, Bobby—"

"Hush!" insisted Bobby.

Joyce was so excited that Friday night that sleep seemed impossible. Saturday dawned crystal clear, and sharp with the tang of autumn in the air. Joyce was up betimes, closing windows, running bath-water.

"Hurry!" she shook Patricia. "It's to-day. I'm so excited. When I woke up this morning, I found I hadn't slept a wink."

"I didn't know you were Irish," said Patricia, sleepily.

Joyce was still pondering over this remark when she and Patricia, fully dressed and snuggling into fur coats, stepped into the Strickland motor. Sally's train was due at seven-sixteen, and the two girls were to meet her, pick up Raoul, all have breakfast at the Strickland home, and get as early a start as possible for the long drive. But as they stepped into the closed car, they found Mrs. Strickland already within.

"Why, Mother," Patricia greeted her happily, "what is it all about?"

"I've decided to go, after all."

"Oh, good!" Patricia and Joyce were unanimous.

Mrs. Strickland smiled affectionately at them.

"I thought it would save time for us all to meet Sally, and then go to the Plaza for breakfast. I told Raoul to meet us there, and I've already ordered the breakfast."

"Delicious!" said Patricia. "I'm starved."

"We'll have to leave directly the game is over. I'm sorry you girls will have to miss the excitement, but, as you know, we sail tomorrow, and I must be home to-night."

Joyce smiled at her shyly.

"That doesn't matter at all, as long as you can go."

An impishly-smiling Sally met them at the Grand Central Station.

"Oh, you darlings!" she tried to hug them both at the same time. "Don't you-all look just gorgeous!"

"Sally from the South," teased Joyce, remembering Sally's habit of giving nick-names.

"I'm so tickled, I'm liable to talk! 'most anyway." Sally was prancing.

"It must be catching," Patricia smiled. "Joyce talked like a native Irishman all the morning."

"What do you mean?" Joyce was still mystified.

"Never mind! I'll wait until I can tell Ray on you."

"Oh, is he going? He is almost as nice as you, Joyce."

"We must hurry, girls. Mother is waiting in the car, and I'm starved."

Raoul was waiting in the hotel lobby for them.

"Why, Joyce," he greeted his sister, "I didn't know you. I thought you must be one of Patricia's friends."

"So I am," retorted Joyce.

"One of her wealthy friends, then."

"Do I look like an heiress?" asked Joyce.

"You look like a millionairess, in that coat," retorted Ray.

"Now, before you two begin to get clever—" said Sally.

"Oh, yes," interrupted Patricia. "Do let me tell you what Joyce said this morning. She awakened me with: 'Oh, Patricia, do get up. I'm so excited that when I woke up this morning, I found I hadn't slept a wink!'"

In the shout of laughter that followed, they all turned toward the dining-room. Mrs. Strickland had engaged a table. Breakfast was quickly served, and eaten with much talk and laughter. In the midst of it Patricia looked up, to find herself gazing into the eyes of Roy Walker.

"Why—why—Roy!" she stammered.

"Good morning!" his voice was sugar-sweet. "You seem to be out early this morning."



“DO I LOOK LIKE AN HEIRESS?” ASKED JOYCE.—Page 206.

Patricia flushed uncomfortably.

“Yes, we’re going to the Yale game.”

“Ah—driving?”

“Yes.”

“How convenient! I myself am going up there to meet some friends. I am alone, and I observe there are only five of you. Mind if I invite myself to ride with you?”

Patricia looked helplessly at her mother. Mrs. Strickland nodded, although evidently none too well pleased.

“Why, of course.” Patricia realized that she was being placed in an uncomfortable position, but made the best of it. “You haven’t met these others, I believe?”

For a few minutes after Roy Walker joined the party the gayety was subdued while he held forth on various topics, chief of which was himself. Neither Raoul nor Joyce liked this young man very well, and Sally, as she often did when she met strangers, assumed the pose of a shy, demure maiden. She glanced at Roy Walker once or twice from lowered eyes, formed a very definite and very private opinion of him, and continued to keep quiet. But when they rose to go, the irresistible part of Sally’s nature found expression.

“I say, Ray, help the heiress on with her coat!”

Joyce made a face at her, and seeing that she really was annoyed, Sally proceeded to tease her.

“I’m about as much an heiress as Helen Trowbridge,” protested Joyce.

“You know Helen Trowbridge?” Roy Walker took an immediate and hitherto unnoticed interest in Joyce. “She’s a charming young one.”

From then on, he directed all his attentions and remarks to Joyce, to Sally’s open delight.

In the car it was the same. Mrs. Strickland sat in front with the driver; Raoul intended to sit on a chair, but Roy Walker maneuvered matters so that Joyce sat beside him, while Raoul occupied the rear seat between Patricia and Sally. Joyce threw the girls a despairing look, which Sally met with a giggle and Patricia with a smile.

The car moved swiftly and easily. The chauffeur was an expert driver. Soon they were out of traffic, away from the city and speeding along the State Highway. The trees were mostly bare of leaves now, the air was sharp, although the sun had warmed it,

but inside the car was only comfort and cheer. Wherever Sally was, there was sure to be nonsense, and to-day was no exception.

“Whom is every one going to root for?” she asked suddenly.

As was to be expected, Roy Walker monopolized the question as applying to himself, and himself only.

“I shall most certainly *not* root for Yale. I’m a Harvard man myself.”

“Lee will love you like a brother!” ejaculated Sally.

“Lee?” He raised an inquiring eyebrow.

“Lee Davis, my cousin. He is the most ardent Yale man I ever knew. Lee is the most ardent soul, anyway. Don’t you think so, Joyce?”

“How should I know?” Joyce was astonished.

“Why, he’s such an ardent admirer of yours,” Sally’s eyes twinkled, “and such an ardent—shall we say, disliker?—of Patricia’s.”

“He doesn’t know much then!” ejaculated Raoul. “Begging your pardon, Sally. I really like Lee Davis immensely, but—” Ray floundered.

Sally laughed.

“Atta boy, Ray! You know, I don’t think Lee really dislikes Patricia at all, he only thinks he does. Oh, you should have seen them at camp last year when they first met. I’ll never forget it.”

The three girls went into gales of laughter, while Raoul looked sheepish, and Roy Walker looked bored.

Despite the fact that it was a long drive, they reached the end of it almost before they realized it. There had been a hurried lunch, and now the roads were crowded with cars bearing gay colors and happy people, all going to the game. New Haven’s streets, none too wide, were packed with cars and people, all streaming to that edge of town where the Bowl is located. Excitement was abroad like a fever; it flushed Sally’s] face and burned Joyce’s cheeks. Joyce scarcely noticed the little park that used to be the Bowling Green, nor the quaint churches on the edge of it.

“Oh,” said Sally, “I do wish you were going to stay longer. There are some lovely drives about here, and a splendid golf course. The Yale buildings are marvellous. There is a new one, comparatively new—”

“Oh, I know about that one,” interrupted Joyce. “It is copied from some English building, isn’t it? Lee wrote me all about it.”

Sally glanced impishly at Roy Walker, but he was leaning forward, speaking to the chauffeur in a commanding manner.

“You may drop me anywhere in the grounds. I have friends to meet.”

Sally gasped and looked at Patricia, who was again flushing uncomfortably.

No word was said as Roy Walker bade them good-bye, but the removal of his presence was the removal of a restraint. The girls grew more and more excited. By the time Lee Davis joined them, they were all chattering at once. Greetings and salutations were so hilarious that even Patricia and Lee forgot to be frosty to one another.

“I have the tickets here,” said Lee, producing them eagerly. “I’ll give you yours. I’m to take Mother and Granny Orcutt out, and I’ll meet you there.”

He spoke cheerfully, but he eyed the others a bit wistfully. Mrs. Strickland said:

“Lee! You get in here with these young people. I’ll take care of your Mother and Mrs. Orcutt.”

“Oh, would you, Mrs. Strickland? You're a brick!”

The car rolled away again, and finally came to a stop not far from a blank-looking, circular wall with doors set in it at even distances. People were streaming in at these doors now. It was a scramble amid a cheering, good-natured crowd to find and enter the right door, and then to find the right seats. Joyce gasped at the sight before her. The Yale Bowl is just that—a bowl, filled now almost to overflowing with a living throng, bedecked in gay colors.

Below, the football field, hardly seeming like an ordinary field, was still empty. The game would not be called for several minutes, but Joyce was too busy, watching the throng, listening to the crisp music of the bands and the cheers of the crowds, to notice the time. Lee Davis seated himself next to her, and for more reasons than one, Joyce was glad of the fur coat.

“It's going to be a great game,” Lee said.

Joyce smiled at him.

“Something must be wrong.”

“Why?” He was surprised.

“I haven’t heard you and Sally quarreling yet.”

“Give us time,” he laughed.

But they had no time to quarrel that afternoon. It was not many minutes before the teams ran on the field. The cheering grew and swelled into a torrent of sound. Then every one settled back into quiet, with little rustlings and murmurings, waiting for the first kick-off.

Princeton won the ball at the start, made their first down, and then lost the ball to Yale. The game was on in full earnest, with intermittent spells of intense quiet, broken by wild shouting. Joyce found herself leaning forward, her hands gripped and icy-cold, though the blood was pounding in her veins. Up and down the field surged the two teams. Twice Princeton was within ten yards of a score, and the Yale line held. The cheering was uproarious. Lee was on his feet, dancing up and down like a madman, his throat nearly bursting. The score stood nothing to nothing at the end of the first quarter.

A few minutes of play in the second quarter and there was a lull. A Yale man was “knocked out.”

"That's Rhodes," Lee said to Joyce, "one of our best men. Looks like they're trying to put him out of the game."

"Rhodes — Rhodes — Rhodes," the chant went over the field from thousands of throats; "Rhodes — Rhodes — Rhodes." And then the cheer-leader began a special yell for the disabled man.

Apparently heartened by this, Rhodes was again on his feet and into the game. Back and forth surged the players. This time Yale made the five-yard line, fumbled, lost the ball, was pushed back, came down again, and the whistle blew! The first half was over—nothing to nothing.

Joyce snuggled back into the fur coat.

"O my!" was all she could manage.

"Isn't it great?" Sally's eyes were dancing "I'd like to go down and hug every one of them. Just listen to that band! I've half a notion to go down and follow it around."

She rose as she spoke, and Lee Davis put out his hand, alarmed: "Sally!"

With a giggle, Sally sank back again to the seat.

"I thought that would annoy you, Lee. Really, though, I *must* do something rash."

“Wait until after the game,” advised Lee.

The second half began rather slowly. Yale kicked, Princeton caught and carried the ball, then kicked. A Yale man caught the ball but was instantly tackled. Then Yale evidently decided that time was getting precious. Once more Yale had the ball, it was in Rhodes' hands; down the field he went, was stopped, second down, two yards to gain. Again Rhodes had the ball, with a strong guard around him. The ball was pushed a good ten yards. An immense sigh arose from the crowd. The same tactics were repeated and another long gain made. Excitement was running high and tense. Ten yards to the goal line. Were they going to kick? No—no! Then, without any one knowing exactly what had happened, Rhodes had the ball, shook off the tacklers, was across the line, men clutching and clinging to him. Pandemonium broke loose. Yale missed the kick, to the accompaniment of many groans, but, nevertheless, the score was six to nothing. And it was still six to nothing at the end of the third quarter.

But the Princeton men were fighters, and before the last quarter had hardly started

they made a touchdown and kicked the goal—seven to six!

“Oh,” groaned Joyce. “Oh, we *must* win.”

Lee's face was white.

Again and again Rhodes tried for a weak spot in the Princeton line, but they knew him now, and he was unable to break through. The fight was furious. There was an upheaval. Yale was penalized fifteen yards. Every one groaned. The Yale men gritted their teeth, covered the fifteen and five more. Another pile-up, and then, tense stillness. One man did not rise.

“Rhodes—Rhodes—Rhodes!” The crowd was vociferous, angry this time.

Lee Davis whipped out his watch.

“Oh,” he groaned, “only five minutes left to play.”

“Look,” Joyce pointed. “He's up again.”

Rhodes was up, staggering groggily between two men.

They lined up, still perilously near the Princeton line. Princeton had the ball—they were going to kick—ah—they had kicked—it was caught—fumbled—Rhodes had the ball. He was around the end. He was running. Oh! He's down! No, he got away

from that man! Look out! Ah! That chap tackled too soon. Rhodes avoided him—and, could it be true? The field was clear ahead of him. He dropped into an easy, deceptive lope, leaving his pursuers far behind. Pandemonium applauded that spectacular play when the ball finally reposed calmly behind the goal-posts. The crowd went wild. This time Yale made its kick, and the score stood thirteen to seven.

Princeton was unable to do anything in the minute and a half left of play. And the game was over!

“That’s once that thirteen was lucky,” said Sally amid the general jubilation. “Where’ll we go first, Lee?”

“Superstitious Sally,” teased Patricia. “We shall have to be starting back almost directly, I’m afraid. I wish we might stay with you and Lee and Granny Orcutt, but I’m afraid it’s impossible this time.”

“Oh,” wailed Sally, “you didn’t tell me that! I knew that old thirteen meant trouble.”

Lee Davis’ face was dismal.

“I’d hoped you’d stay. There will be much excitement here to-night.”

“I’m sorry.” Mrs. Strickland, with Granny Orcutt and Mrs. Davis had joined them. “I warned the girls we’d have to leave early.”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” said Joyce. “It has been a perfectly wonderful time. I shall never forget it!”

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

MR. AND MRS. STRICKLAND sailed the next day. Patricia and Joyce went down to see them off. Seeing the enormous boat, Mrs. Strickland's room filled with flowers, candy, and books, was a breath-taking experience for Joyce. Patricia was calm about it all.

"Wouldn't you *love* to be going?" asked Joyce.

"I probably shall go next year. Father expects to be back this time in a month or six weeks."

Cheerfully the girls waved good-by from the dock. Joyce feared that Patricia would be lonesome, but Patricia had often said good-by to her mother and father, and this absence was to be for only a short while.

"I have permission for us to go to a matinee to-day," she confided to Joyce. "I worked on Miss Brent's sympathies a bit. Which one shall we attend? Mary Taintor is coming, too."

Joyce was happy to go to anything, and said so.

"You know," continued Patricia, "I've a notion to take Miss Brent into my confidence."

"She's a dear," admitted Joyce.

"Marion Howland is furious at me, and is telling all sorts of tales about that Turk's Head affair."

Joyce looked at Patricia.

"Just what happened? You never told me."

"Oh—plenty!" Patricia remembered suddenly just what had happened.

"Do you mind, so very much?"

"In a way, I do mind, of course, but when I think of Mary Taintor, and Philo Cornish—and you, all on the outside, I'm glad I resigned."

"Bobby Howland, too," said Joyce, "You know she refused to go in."

"Yes, Bobby's a dear."

The next few weeks sped so fast that Joyce felt most of the time as though she were on a merry-go-round. Sundays flew around so fast they made her dizzy. Thanksgiving came and went, with two notable occurrences to remember it by.

The first and foremost was the Symphony Concert which the girls were allowed to attend in the evening. Joyce had never before heard

a Symphony Concert, and although she was limp afterwards from the exaltation of it, it seemed to her at the time that she was floating far above earth on magnificent waves of sound.

The other happening, although of much slighter consequence, was far more human and amusing. When Joyce and Patricia, accompanied by Bobby, returned to their room after an enormous turkey dinner, a purple box reposed on Joyce's dressing-table.

"For me?" She asked in surprise.

Her name was written clearly on it. Inside the box was a cluster of perfect orchids. With a cry of delight, Joyce lifted them out and buried her face in them.

"Who sent them?" asked Bobby, curiously.

"Goodness gracious! I don't know." Joyce hunted frantically through the box for a card. At last she found it and held it to the light. "Mr.—Roy—Walker!" she gasped. "My—good-ness—gra-cious!"

She sank limply to a chair. Then she and Patricia broke into hilarious laughter.

"What is so funny?" asked Bobby.

"We were fooling that day at the football game, teasing Joyce about your fur coat,"

explained Patricia, "and calling her an heir-ess—and he believed it!"

"Oh, I must explain!" said Joyce.

"Explain—nothing!" ejaculated Bobby. "Let him alone. He's no good, anyway, and maybe you can switch his interest from Marion. That doesn't sound very complimentary to you, Joyce, but it is, really, because you have sense enough to see him for what he really is, and that's more than I can say for Marion."

"But I feel as though I were receiving goods under false pretenses," protested Joyce so seriously that she sent the others off into gales of laughter again.

Christmas holidays were the next big event. Most of the girls looked forward to them more eagerly than either Joyce or Patricia did. Patricia had had word that her mother and father would not be home until some time in February. Joyce planned to stay right at school. Although both girls had been asked out for the actual day, the rest of the two weeks and a half looked like a long stretch.

"Oh, well," Joyce was trying to be as cheerful as possible, "Raoul will be here. We can do a lot of things, if he isn't too busy. It won't be half bad."

But this was to be a year of surprises for Joyce. Two days before the actual closing of the school, Raoul called up, and asked in an excited voice: "Joyce, where and when can I see you at once?"

"Ray! Anything important?" Joyce was frightened.

"Mighty important, but mighty nice."

"Well, to-night isn't Callers' Night, but perhaps I can get permission for you as long as you're a brother." Joyce was too relieved to be excited.

When she and Patricia went down that evening to receive Raoul, she was normally curious.

"Listen, Joy!" Ray was unable to contain his surprise a second longer. "I got an unexpected bonus. Talk about tickled! And you and I are going home for the holidays! It's the best present I could think of—for every one."

Joyce was hard put to keep from expressing her elation with an Indian war-whoop, until she saw Patricia's face.

"Oh, Patricia, what will you do?"

"I don't know exactly."

“Come on out with us.” It was Ray’s sudden inspiration.

Patricia’s face lighted.

“I might! How soon do you leave?”

“Well,” Raoul sobered to discuss plans, “you girls would have to leave ahead of me. I can get leave for only about five days, including Christmas, and most of those will be spent on the train. You and Joy could go out on the special car that takes the Minneapolis girls, couldn’t you? I know Grandma Parsons would love to have you. If she wouldn’t, there’s always room at the Hunter house.”

Such a busy twenty-four hours as the two girls put in, packing, sorting, sending telegrams, buying tickets. Lessons went by the board entirely, but since it was the last day of school, no one paid any special attention. And when the Manhattan Flier left the Grand Central Station, Joyce and Patricia were among the passengers.

The arrival in Westcott was almost as hilarious as the departure from New York. The girls had made connections in Chicago by a very slight margin. Joyce was too excited to sleep much, and was up early, fortunately, for Grandma Parsons and Mrs. Hunter met

the train at the junction. Without a word Joyce flew into her mother's arms. Then how tongues did fly.

Westcott was covered with snow, and it never looked so beautiful to Joyce as it did that early December morning. An impatient Bobbie, a calm Timmie, and an excited Bingo were waiting on the station platform to greet her. Almost immediately there was a tangle of girl, two small boys, and a dog, from which Joyce emerged slightly dishevelled, with her hat over one eye, but radiantly happy.

"Oh, it seems so good to see you all again," she repeated over and over. "Timmie, you've grown a foot!"

"Me, too," insisted Bobbie. "Me, too."

Patricia came in for her share of welcome, none the less warm, although a trifle more sedate.

Events began with a rush. Apparently every one in town knew that Patricia and Joyce were coming for the holidays. That very first evening almost the entire senior class arrived at the Hunter home, Patricia in their midst. With much shouting and hilarity rugs were rolled back, furniture pushed aside, and an impromptu dance started, with differ-

ent girls taking turns at the piano. During the first part of the evening Bobbie and Timmie were very much underfoot, but before long they were shooed off to bed. Joyce's mother and father sat and beamed upon the fun, joined for a while by Grandma Parsons.

"Grandfather was too tired to come," she said, "but I just couldn't miss it. It makes me think of my own young days."

"I do wish Ray could have been here for this," confided Joyce to John Rogers as they danced.

"Is he changed?" asked John.

"Ray? Why, I don't know. Yes, I believe he is. He's lots nicer, though."

"You know," John looked at her in awe, "you seem different, yourself."

"Oh, no," laughed Joyce, "nothing in the world could ever change me, or make me love Westcott any the less."

The evening finished with an impromptu meal. Two of the boys ran out and returned with a bagful of hot-dog sandwiches. Mrs. Hunter produced "a cake" made in honor of Joyce's homecoming, and Patricia ran across the yard and returned with a jar of Grandma Parson's special "Dills."

The next two or three days went quickly, much too quickly to suit Joyce, who tried hard to keep back each precious minute, but with shopping, a flying trip to Minneapolis, last-minute preparations for Christmas, seeing the different boys and girls, a skating party, a candy pull, and one afternoon spent skiing with Bobbie and Timmie, the time flew.

The morning of the day before Christmas, Joyce came flying down the stairs, late for breakfast. At the bottom she collided with Ray, who stood, bag in hand, waiting to go up.

“Why don’t you look where you’re going?” he called.

“Why don’t you go where you’re looking?” gasped Joyce as she flung her arms around him. “You got in my way, Ray. I didn’t expect you until to-morrow. My, I’m glad to see you! The place didn’t seem like home without you.”

“I suppose it wouldn’t seem like home unless you were here, either, but I certainly was glad to see Dad, Mother, Irma, and the boys.”

“It’s been just perfect. Irma’s being so sweet. She seems like a different person. I can’t quite decide whether it’s our absence or the presence of some one else,” Joyce smiled mysteriously.

"What do you mean?" Raoul looked blank.

"Never mind. Gracious, here you stand, no doubt starved. Dash up and primp a bit, and we'll gobble some breakfast."

"For a young lady just returned from New York, you seem dreadfully slangy."

Joyce giggled.

"Excitement affects me that way. It's like Sally with her Southern expressions."

Although Christmas Eve was a gay and happy time, with snow falling steadily outside and an enormous fire roaring inside, Christmas Day itself was the big day in the Hunter family. Joyce had been awakened early by the clatter of the boys, Raoul as noisy as either Timmie or Bobbie, and Bingo adding his share to the general excitement. Joyce's most important present was a wrist-watch, small and beautiful. Irma, enveloped in that soft glow which Joyce had mentioned to Raoul, drew Joyce aside during the course of the morning and showed her a small but exquisite diamond set in a ring to be worn on the third finger of a the left hand.

"No one is to know, Joyce, only just you and Mother. We shall not be married until next June, but I'm so happy."

She gave Joyce an ecstatic hug, which Joyce returned.

“Tom Benson?” asked Joyce.

Irma nodded, her eyes sparkling.

Personally, Joyce thought Tom Benson a very ordinary sort of a chap, a young man trying to establish a dentist's practice in Minneapolis, a friend of Celia Laurence's, very kind, very accommodating, very ordinary, but in Irma's eyes he was perfection. Joyce sighed a little, scarcely knowing why herself, but that tiny sigh was quickly engulfed in a big wave of joyousness.

Grandfather and Grandma Parsons were coming over for dinner. Grandma Parsons and Mrs. Hunter had been busy for two days, preparing it. For the evening, several of the boys and girls had planned a big “bobbing” party.

It was just as the Hunters and their guests finished their enormous dinner of “turkey and fixings,” as Grandfather Parsons expressed it, that the doorbell rang. Joyce looked about in surprise. Every one was present and accounted for: Grandfather Parsons, Grandma Parsons, Patricia, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, Raoul, Irma, Tom Benson, Timmie, Bobbie,

even Bingo contentedly chewing a bone in the kitchen.

"Who can it be?" asked Joyce.

No one seemed to know.

"Better answer it, Joyce," her father spoke.

Dropping her napkin, Joyce flew to the front door and pulled it open. Then she stood transfixed, her mouth open.

"Why, Lee Davis!" she managed to gasp, at last. "How did you get here? How? Where? When? Why?"

Lee laughed and stepped across the threshold, bringing with him a tall, dark, romantic-looking young man.

"Joyce, this is Peter Craig. Have you any turkey left? You see, for once, I'm doing anything but the formal, proper thing."

Joyce, almost too overcome to move, finally took them into the dining-room and introduced them all around. While the two young men were indulging in enormous platefuls of turkey, Lee explained:

"You see, we were at a party in Louisville, night before last—"

"Night before last," gasped Joyce. "But Lee—"

"Night before last," continued Lee calmly.

“It was a dull party, and the weather was slushy and miserable. I said I sure would like to see some cold, snappy weather, and heaps of snow. You see, I’d just had a taste of it before I left Yale. Well, Craig here heard me, and offered to fly north with me. He’s just acquired a new super-machine that he’s been aching to try out for a week. Sally was there, and she bet us we’d never go. Naturally then we *had* to go. We really started for New England yesterday morning. Then I remembered that Minnesota had the best snowstorms in the country—or so I’d been told!” He smiled at Joyce. “So here we are. We landed in Minneapolis about two hours ago, and motored over.”

Joyce looked from one to the other, round-eyed.

“And I remember,” spoke up Grandma Parsons, “the time that Harvey Strickland drove up from Chicago to see Molly. It took him the better part of three days, and we thought it was marvellous that a machine could travel so fast.”

The laughter was general except for Joyce. She was still too overcome to believe her eyes.

“Won’t Sally be furious,” Lee Davis

chuckled "when she finds we've eaten Christmas dinner with you two? That alone is worth the trip!"

Peter Craig was quiet, saying little, keeping his eyes for the most part on Patricia.

"We should have snow enough to satisfy you," said Ray.

"Oh, that reminds me," Joyce came to life, "I do hope you have warm clothes. There's a bobbing party on to-night. They've iced North Elm Street, and it's going to be a lark!"

"Our flying suits should be just right for that," spoke up Peter Craig. "They are in the back of the car we drove over in. I didn't quite like to leave them at the flying-field in Minneapolis."

Arrangements were made that Lee and his friend were to stay at Grandma Parsons', and Patricia was to spend the night with Joyce.

"We must be up and away early to-morrow morning, though," said Peter Craig.

"We wired from Minneapolis where we were," Lee chuckled again. "I know Sally is just dancing up and down in rage by this time."

The bobbing party was a hilarious success. Each bob carried from six to ten persons.

Steering these sleds down the long icy slope of Elm Street was no mean accomplishment. Raoul Hunter took charge of the first sled, with Joyce on the tail-end. He looked around for Patricia, but she was standing near Peter Craig, helping him fix his bob for starting. With a little push and a shout, Joyce leaped on the flying bob-sled. Like a streak of greased lightning, they were off down the long, icy slide, whizzing ever faster and faster. The wintry wind tore at loose ends of hair and whipped cheeks with a frosty snap. The moon was up and the air was full of silver. Faster and faster they went, shouting and hilarious. This street for five blocks had been given over to sliding purposes, and there was no danger of cross-streets. With a deft turn, Ray brought the bob about at the end of the slide. The rear end tipped slightly on the turn, spilling Joyce and Caroline Boyd into a heap of snow. Sputtering and laughing, the girls jumped to their feet and ran towards Raoul.

“Let’s duck him,” insisted Joyce.

Raoul, however, was perfectly capable of taking care of himself. Up the hill they went, willing hands tugging at the long rope that pulled the bob. When they were half-way up,

another sled whizzed by them, the riders laughing and shouting. Ray paused and watched them.

"I hope Lee makes the turn all right," he worried.

Lee successfully took the swing, and Ray sighed in relief.

"He's never steered one before," he confided to Joyce, "and they're tricky things."

"Don't I know it!" exclaimed Joyce. "When I steer one, all I can ever see is a high board fence of telephone poles."

The third bob whizzed past, with Peter Craig steering, and Patricia close behind him. Raoul was extremely quiet the rest of the way up the hill. When he reached the top he sat down on the bob.

"Come on," shouted two or three, "let's get started before the others get here."

Ray neither moved nor answered, and his passengers were forced to dance and hop about in the snow to keep warm.

The other two bobs came up together. Patricia was covered with snow from top to toe.

"We had a terrible spill." She laughed as she said it, but she still limped. "This Craig

man may be able to handle a flying-machine, but he's not so good on solid earth. Ray Hunter, I ride with you from now on."

With a shout, Ray leaped to his feet, his eyes shining. He whirled the long bob-sled to the top of the slide and gayly assisted Patricia to the next place behind himself.

"All aboard for the Big Special," he shouted.

"Patricia!" Joyce pretended to pout. "You've just naturally made each person move back one space—and that leaves me sitting in mid-air."

"There's plenty of room on my bob," said Lee Davis, gallantly. "I think we need an extra push. We didn't go nearly fast enough last time. Come on, Joy, be tail-light for us."

After sliding until they were half frozen, and "absolutely starved," as Joyce put it, every one went gayly back to the Hunter home, lugging the bobs with them. Mrs. Hunter and Grandma Parsons had prepared waffles and sausage cakes enough to feed an army.

"What a day!" Patricia stretched luxuriously as she and Joyce were preparing for bed. "It was certainly lots nicer than it would have been in that stuffy old school."

“Patricia!” said Joyce. “School isn’t stuffy. It’s wonderful.”

“I’m glad you like it.” Suddenly Patricia giggled. “Do you know why that Craig man upset our bob?”

“No,” said Joyce. “How did it happen? It was the only time he did it all evening. I rode with him several times.”

“I called him ‘Pete’. He was absolutely furious, so furious he forgot what he was doing. He turned around and glared at me. ‘Only one person in the world is allowed to call me *that* name,’ he said. ‘Who is it?’ I asked, startled. Then we dumped. His mouth was full of snow, but he managed to sputter, ‘Sally Orcutt’.”

CHAPTER XV

BASKET-BALL

“WELL, here we are, back again.” Patricia dropped her purse and gloves on her dressing-table and sank into a chair with a sigh.

“Wasn’t it a glorious vacation?” Joyce’s eyes danced.

“I know, you’re thinking of those lovely roses Lee Davis sent you,” teased Patricia.

“I’m not,” Joyce defended herself, “although it was nice of him. I liked them heaps better than Roy Walker’s candy.”

Patricia giggled.

“You’ve certainly acquired Roy Walker. I think you’ve eliminated Marion Howland altogether.”

“Oh, I hope not!” Joyce looked worried. “It’s like acquiring money under false pretenses. He never knew I was on earth until you and Sally called me an heiress. Besides, I don’t like him.”

“Oh, let it alone,” advised Patricia. “Marion needs an eye-opener.”

Joyce said no more, but she resolved firmly

to enlighten Roy Walker the next time she saw him. At that second the door burst open and a whirlwind enveloped Joyce, a whirlwind which turned out to be Bobby Howland.

"I am glad to see you two." Bobby danced over to Patricia and hugged her. "Did you have a good time during vacation?"

"Oh, glorious!" Both Patricia and Joyce broke into speech.

"Tell me about it."

Needing no further urging, both girls talked at once, interrupting each other, laughing and chattering.

School started with a vim. The girls returned from vacation with fresh enthusiasm and energy. The new members of the basket-ball team were to be chosen at the first meeting. Joyce went with a high-beating heart. The fact that she had not made Turk's Head bothered her not at all, but she was eager to make the basket-ball team; not the first team,—she had no hope of that,—but the second, which was really almost as important as the first. The second team was known as the Green Team, the first as the White Team, for the suits of the first were of

white trimmed with green, and those of the second were green, trimmed with white. Either team made a striking appearance on the floor, and the last two years even the Green Team had played outsiders.

"The White Team may be beautiful, but it's a costly job keeping the suits clean," groaned Bobby.

"You shouldn't complain," said Joyce, "making first team at your age and with your experience."

"I deserve to make it, don't I?" asked Bobby, with her impish grin.

"Well, to be honest, I suppose you do," said Joyce with a smile, "although it's a bit hard on Marion."

"Oh," Bobby shrugged her shoulders in disdain, "since Marion's fallen in love, basket-ball no longer interests her. She could easily have held her place as forward, but she never comes out for practice any more."

"Fallen in love! With whom?"

"Oh, *she* thinks it's Roy Walker, but it isn't."

Joyce was startled. "Who is it?"

"Herself! Marion really should be an actress. She is such a dramatic soul, at

times. But do hurry, Joyce. We're late now."

The White Team now consisted of Patricia at center, with Helen Bigbee and Doris Caldwell as side-centers; Bobby had Marion's place as forward with Fran Evans, while Alice Dane and Philo Cornish played guards. Philo was highly pleased to be on the first team. The second team was far more variable. Joyce occasionally played center, although more often she played forward. She preferred this latter position.

Miss Brockwell sounded her whistle and the teams lined up. For ten minutes the play was fast and furious, and then Miss Brockwell blew for rest. Philo Cornish dropped near Joyce

"You ought to be playing forward on the first team in Fran Evans' place," she said.

"Oh, no," said Joyce. "She plays a much better game than I do."

"A much trickier game! I'm surprised that Miss Brockwell doesn't see it."

"But—" protested Joyce.

"I know whereof I speak. I'm guarding you, and I have at times played guard against Fran Evans. You play a better game."

Despite the opinion of Philo Cornish and two or three of the other girls, Joyce did not make first team, but she was well content with her place on second.

The first game of the season was played in the home gymnasium. The opposing team was from the Oakley school. Several girls from this school came as spectators and to support their own team. Joyce, in her green suit, sat on the side-lines, tense with excitement.

The Oakley girls outplayed Miss Brent's girls despite Patricia's tallness and Bobby's quickness. They found a weak spot in Fran Evans and played it for all it was worth. At the end of the first half the score stood six to nothing, in favor of the Oakley team. Joyce groaned as the whistle blew.

"Oh, Patricia," she whispered, "we can't let them beat us!"

Intermission was quickly over, and the girls lined up again. The whistle blew and the ball rose gracefully. A quick jump, and Patricia had it. It rose again and dropped into Fran Evans' arms. There was a scramble, between Frances and her guard, then the sharp sound of the whistle. Miss Brockwell ran to the spot, followed by several

of the girls. The guard was flat on her back, Fran Evans standing triumphant over her, the ball in her hands. Miss Brockwell looked from one girl to the other, then dropped to her knees. The guard was not greatly injured, but she was unable to finish the game. Fran Evans smiled as she was helped from the floor.

Without a word Miss Brockwell took the ball from Fran Evans, blew her whistle, announced a double foul. Then very quietly she led Fran from the floor and summoned Joyce to take her place.

Joyce's knees shook so hard as she lined for the throw, that she could scarcely see the basket. She shut her eyes and shot blindly, but luck was with her. The ball rose in a beautiful arc, and swished through the basket, the first score for Miss Brent's. The forward on the Oakley side missed her throw, and the score stood six to one.

Heartened by this, Miss Brent's girls played as they had never played before. Time after time the ball reached Joyce, but her guard was stronger than she and very active. Time was flying, and the score was still six to one. Again the ball was in Joyce's hands, and again the basket far away and

the guard close by. Out of the corner of her eye Joyce saw Patricia well away from her guard. She dribbled the ball, whirled quickly, and shot it back to center. Patricia was surprised, but quick to comprehend. Like a flash, she caught the ball and stood poised. It was a long shot to the basket from where she stood, but the way was clear. Patricia aimed and threw, just as her guard leaped toward her, but the maneuver was successful. The ball dropped in and through, amid much cheering. Six to three! Not so bad. A few seconds later Patricia and Joyce, now fully understanding each other, did the same trick. Six to five! But the third attempt was a failure. Patricia's guard had waked up.

Six to five, and the last quarter nearly gone. Joyce was frantic. She could not shake off her guard. Surely there couldn't be more than two minutes left to play. The Oakley girls had just missed another free shot, amid groans of their friends. The ball was up in the center. Patricia had it. Straight at Joyce it came. She fumbled, caught it, and, with an idea, she threw it to Patricia, clapped her hands, and jumped.

Her guard was close beside her. Patricia caught the ball, keeping off her own guard. With a quick motion Joyce was around her guard and across the floor. Patricia threw the ball. Joyce caught it, whirled, and aimed straight at the basket. The ball hit the rim, teetered a minute, and slid in, just as time was called for the end of the game.

Breathless and excited, the girls gathered around Joyce to give their call.

"No doubt of you making the White Team now," Philo Cornish whispered to her excitedly.

"You made two baskets, Joyce. I didn't get a chance," wailed Bobby.

"You didn't take one," teased Joyce. "But then," she added honestly, "I think Patricia was trying to help me to make the team."

"Is that so?" said Patricia. "Your own playing did that."

Joyce was so delighted over having made the team that she called Ray to tell him about it.

"Good for you, Joy! I think that calls for a celebration."

"I'd like that. What shall it be?"

Raoul considered.

“There’s a big carnival on down here. It’s a benefit of some sort. Do you think you could get permission to come to it?”

“I don’t know. Patricia’s a senior, and you’re my brother. We might. May I bring Bobby Howland, too?”

“By all means—Saturday afternoon.”

With a little difficulty, permission was acquired. Joyce was stunned by the size of the building. Three floors of it had been given over to flower-selling, to booths for fortune-tellers, to performances of different sorts.

Bobby and Joyce took to collecting “fortunes.” Since there were at least a dozen booths of this sort on each floor, and since each teller had widely different methods and widely different results, the girls grew hilarious. After the third one, they went at it in a business-like way, writing down what they could remember, comparing notes.

“I was to be very wealthy and a society lady in the first one,” giggled Bobby. “This last one said I should always have to work for my living.”

With shouts of laughter they prepared to

enter the tent of Mizra, the most popular of all the fortune-tellers, but they were halted at the entrance, and led to chairs in the outer part of the tent.

"Some one is within," the attendant informed them.

They waited more or less patiently until the curtain was raised.

"Why, Marion!" gasped Bobby.

Marion paused, tried to step back, but at that instant Roy Walker joined her.

"Well, you two!" Bobby was disgusted.

"She told us some marvellous things," Marion flashed Roy Walker an adoring look.

"Bosh! Did you have permission to come here?"

Marion blushed and stammered, but was saved from answering by the attendant, who approached and addressed Bobby.

"You may enter now."

"No, thanks," said Bobby. "I've lost my taste for it. Come on, Joyce. Let's get out of here."

Roy Walker had seen Joyce, and, much to every one's disgust, he insisted upon joining their party. They found Raoul and Patricia at the Flower Show, inspecting row upon

row of chrysanthemums of various shades, sizes, and colors.

“They are the most gorgeous things!” Patricia sighed blissfully. “Oh—Roy Walker—” Her manner changed subtly.

Marion had grown sulky, and as soon as she possibly could, she excused herself on the grounds that she must report at school. Roy Walker made no attempt to go with her, much to Joyce’s disgust. He insisted upon going to a near-by tea-shop. And though the food was delicious and the music and dancing both enjoyable, Joyce was glad when the party broke up and she escaped from his attentions.

“I just can’t stand him,” Joyce confided to Bobby.

“And of course that makes you all the more attractive,” nodded Bobby.

The next big event was the swimming-meet. This was held in the evening, and no outsiders were allowed. The clubs grouped together on one side of the pool, cheering for their own entrants. These girls pointedly ignored Patricia. Joyce entered the preliminaries, and was really thrilled at the sight of so many girls gathered to watch. But

Joyce was not a strong swimmer, and was eliminated early. Patricia was forbidden to enter because of her recent illness.

The last and biggest event of the evening was the long-distance swim. The girls went round and round the pool. Joyce had dressed and was watching by Patricia's side. One by one the swimmers dropped out until only three were left,—Mary Taintor, Philo Cornish, and Bobby. Patricia chuckled.

“What's wrong?” asked Joyce, surprised.

“There are the three most representative girls in school, the best liked, the most athletic, and every one of them refused to join a Club.”

Gallant little Bobby dropped out first.

“Whew!” she said as she came up the steps, dripping. “I thought I was good,—but—” she sank into a heap.

Joyce and Patricia helped her to a dressing-room. When they returned, Philo was shaking Mary Taintor by the hand.

“You win,” said Philo. “You deserve to win.”

“I've swam in almost every ocean,” panted Mary. “After to-night, I think I could swim across the biggest one.”

The girls escorted her gayly to her room.



GALLANT LITTLE BOBBY DROPPED OUT FIRST.—Page 248.

“It must be wonderful to be you!” Joyce looked at her round-eyed.

Mary hugged her.

“Joyce Hunter, you’re a darling. It seems as though I just haven’t seen you at all since the Christmas holidays. I did see a lot of you when I first got back, but this business of being a senior is an exhausting one. It certainly keeps you doing something every instant.”

“I know,” said Joyce. “If Patricia and I didn’t room together, I don’t believe I’d ever see her.”

“That reminds me,” Mary turned to Patricia, “they’ve made me Mistress of Ceremonies for the valentine party. You’ll sing for us, won’t you, Patricia?”

Patricia flushed.

“I will, if you want me to, Mary, but, truly, I’d rather not.”

“Why?”

Patricia was silent for a minute, her lips tight together.

“The club girls!” she burst out. “They’ve all been horrid! Not that I care—”

Mary opened her eyes wider.

“I see. Well, all the more, then, I want you to sing.”

Patricia nodded, but did not speak again.

The valentine party was only for the girls of the school. It began with an elaborate dinner. Joyce, attired in her loveliest gown, her hair shining, her face aglow, enjoyed every instant of the meal. The girls all saved their valentines, to open them at the table. Joyce's place was piled as high as any one's with flowers and various tokens of the day. This was the one dinner in the year when the girls were allowed to choose their own places. Mary Taintor, Patricia, Joyce, Bobby Howland, Philo Cornish, Alice Dane, and Doris Caldwell all sat together, with Miss Brockwell for their hostess.

"I really feel quite out of it," smiled Mary. "Do you realize that I am the only one here who isn't on the White Team?"

"You can't be very athletic," teased Patricia. "You only won the long-distance swim."

Patricia was gay, but it was easy to see it was a forced gayety.

After dinner the girls adjourned to the large reception-room. Mary had arranged for a musical program, calling only on the talent in the school. There were several

very delightful numbers. The last on the program was Patricia's song.

She sang two rather difficult bits, which Joyce did not fully appreciate,—a charming little French song, and then a very modern bit, "Cargoes." This drew a picture of three varied ships and their cargoes. The first two boats were lovely, their cargoes poem-pictures. "Sweet white wine," ended the first verse. The second verse was of the "stately Spanish galleon," and its rich cargo of gold and silks; the last was a scrubby steamer, bunting through the fog of the English Channel, its cargo consisting of "cheap tin trays," a sordid contrast to the pictures of beauty, but strikingly vivid. The tune had a lilting swing, and Patricia rendered it well. At the end there was a little desultory clapping.

Patricia flushed and walked from the piano. The girls all flocked around the other performers, who were, for the most part, club girls, cutting Patricia noticeably. Joyce rushed up to her, her hands clenched.

"Don't you mind, Patricia. I'll get right up here and tell them what they all amount to."

“No! no!” protested Patricia. “Where is Mary?”

“She and Philo were called out a few minutes ago. I don't know where Bobby has gone.”

“I'm going to my room,” Patricia turned away.

“I'm going with you,” Joyce's loyal heart was aching for her friend.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HORSEBACK TRIP

“WHERE are you girls going for your Easter vacation?” Mary Taintor asked one Sunday afternoon. “We have ten days this year.” The girls were lounging around, eating candy, reading books.

“Gracious!” said Patricia. “Is it so late in the year already? I had a cable from Dad this morning. They will not be home until after vacation-time at least. They’ve been delayed again.”

“My mother and father are coming up from the South,” said Bobby, “and that means I’ll stay right here in New York for my vacation. No thrill to that!”

“I wish I might go home,” said Joyce, “but of course that is out of the question.”

“Why I asked,—” Mary leaned over, selected a fat chocolate, and popped it into her mouth, then she gulped and gasped. “Why didn’t you tell me that was one of those juicy cherries?”

The other three all shouted with laughter, in which Mary joined as soon as she was able.

"Now," she said when she caught her breath again, "Mother and Dad and I are taking a horseback trip through the Shenandoah Valley. Daddy thought maybe you three might care to join us."

"Oh!" wailed Bobby. "Perfectly marvelous! And I can't go. It's quite impossible."

Joyce gasped and looked at Patricia.

Patricia's face was aglow.

"Mary, how wonderful! I'd love it. Would you Joyce?"

"Would I!"

"We are going to the Luray Caverns first, and then just gypsy around."

"I could weep," said Bobby.

And Bobby did all but weep when she saw the girls starting off without her. They went by train to Washington, and from there to the Luray Caverns.

The Caverns enchanted Joyce, although she felt a queer little thrill when she found herself actually underground.

"I feel like a gnome," Joyce shivered delightfully.

The stalactites and stalagmites formed weird figures. In some places the cave roof came down so low they grazed their shoulders

against it, and again it was so high that it formed a perfect dome over their heads.

“The last cavern I was in,” said Mary, “was the Blue Grotto of Capri. That is lovely, and all the more fascinating because you have to enter it by boat, but I think this is extremely interesting.”

“It gives me funny little shivers,” said Joyce.

The owner of the caves, Mr. Southwich, joined them and invited them up to his house for lunch. He was a delightful old man, sweet and thoughtful, and his hospitality was as charming as himself. He showed his guests how his house was piped, so that in summer the cool air from the caves kept him comfortable.

The next day they started on their horseback trip. The day was a soft April one, full of the cloudy blueness of Virginia. Joyce caught her breath as she gazed at the undulating hills, softly blue, that rolled away before her. Each girl had a horse claimed to be trustworthy. Patricia had her own horse, Challenge, which had been sent on; Joyce longed for Skip or even for Thunder, but made the best of the blue roan; Mary had a nervous

little black horse that jumped at every sound, but Mary rode him confidently. Mrs. Taintor had the most gentle horse, and Mr. Taintor, the heaviest and blackest. It was a very merry party that started out.

"Oh, we have hills in Minnesota," breathed Joyce, "but they're never like this."

"No, the Shenandoah is alone in its glory," said Mrs. Taintor.

"I used to think when people said the mountains of Virginia were blue that they were wrong, but I've learned better," said Mary.

"There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," quoted Mr. Taintor to his daughter.

"I should think Mary had seen most of them," said Patricia.

"Most of the seeable ones, perhaps," said Mary quietly, "but there is so much in life that isn't seen. What is it the Bible says about the unseen things being the eternal ones?"

"And if we are quoting," said Mrs. Taintor gently, "Let us not forget L'Avengro."

"What is that?" asked Joyce. "I never heard of it."

“ ‘There is day and night, Brother, both sweet things:

‘There is sun, moon, and stars, Brother, all sweet things;

‘There is likewise a wind on the heath.’ ”

Mrs. Taintor spoke in her musical voice.

“It seems so appropriate for a trip of this sort.”

“Only,” teased Mr. Taintor, “I’m afraid it’s more likely to be a rain than a wind on the heath.”

Joyce found both Mr. and Mrs. Taintor charming. She had met them before when they had been in Minneapolis, but that was only a fleeting glimpse. She felt that now she was beginning really to know them. Mr. Taintor was a tall man, well-built, athletic-looking, decidedly an outdoor person. His face was ruddy, his hair more than slightly grey, but he was active and strong, seeming never to tire. He loved to tease, but the ready smile which accompanied his remarks was always balm, and if any one were in trouble, he was kindness itself. Joyce admired especially his efficiency in any emergency. Mrs. Taintor was slender and dark. Her eyes were almost black, and they glowed continually, as though lit by an inner fire.

Her manner was easy, her voice soft, but she seemed able to endure any sort of hardship.

"No wonder Mary is such a wonderful girl," said Joyce, impulsively.

"Only isn't it a shame," teased Mary, "that I'm neither beautiful like Mother nor stunning like Dad?"

"Why, you are!" Joyce looked at her in surprise.

"Which? Stunning or beautiful?" teased Mary.

"Both," said Joyce.

"Which goes to show," said Mary with a laugh, "that beauty is usually in the eyes of the beholder."

"But, Mary, you *are* beautiful," insisted Joyce.

"I would be perhaps," said Mary ruefully, "if I weren't so 'pleasingly plump,' as Dad puts it."

"My mother was, to me, the finest woman who ever lived," said Mr. Taintor. "You make me think of her, Mary."

"Gracious," exclaimed Mary, "if I get any more compliments this morning, I shall not be able to sit on this horse."

Even as she spoke, the horse shied at a little

eddy of dust in the road, and Mary nearly lost her balance.

The first day was an easy one. They stopped for a picnic lunch, which every one heartily enjoyed. Joe, a big Russian, who had for years been Mr. Taintor's servant and body-guard, drove a camp car ahead, filled with supplies and tents. Things were always ready when the horseback riders arrived.

"This is certainly camping de luxe," said Mary. "Sometimes I'm almost ashamed of it. You should have seen Dad and I rough it in the Rockies last summer."

"Your mother wasn't along then," Mr. Taintor reminded Mary gently.

Mary winked at the girls.

"I'm such a big, husky brute, I don't count."

"Well," teased her father, "there is certainly nothing fragile about you."

They camped in the open the first night. Joe had three tents pitched, a roaring camp-fire going, and the hot meal all prepared. The girls all ate like ravenous savages.

"There must be something in this air," sighed Mary. "I never ate so much in my life."

"No," said her father, smiling, "ordinarily a crust of bread and a little tea satisfies you."

After supper Mary coaxed Joe into telling them some of the weird tales of his own land.

"How does he happen to be named Joe if he's a Russian?" Joyce whispered to Mary.

"Oh, that isn't his name, really," Mary whispered back. "His real name is an unpronounceable one, full of *c*'s and *z*'s and *w*'s, but Dad calls him Joe, and from Dad he'll accept anything,—eats out of his hand, as it were."

Joyce looked at the man, round-eyed.

"He certainly is large!"

"And a lamb," added Mary. "Dad rescued him from wolves one night in Siberia, ten or eleven years ago."

"Not real wolves!" ejaculated Joyce.

"They were real, all right. Ask Joe. He still carries a big scar on one shoulder where two of them attacked him."

"How terrible!" shuddered Joyce.

"Maybe he'll tell us about it," suggested Patricia, who had joined them.

"I doubt it," said Mary. "It is too sacred a thing to him to be talked about in public, but he has loads of other wild tales that are fully as exciting."

So it proved. Seated around the glowing

camp-fire, the girls listened to long tales of foreign lands, tales of cold and snow and starvation, of queer customs, of eerie happenings, all told in Joe's deep, sonorous voice.

"Goodness!" Joyce shivered as she crawled between her blankets a little later. "I'm glad I live in the good old United States."

For four days they rode to their heart's content, seeing new scenery, breathing invigorating air, enjoying life in the open, and sleeping at night in the tents Joe always had ready for them. But on the fifth day catastrophe overtook them.

It was a wet, raw morning when they started. Joe had had trouble with the car, and remained behind. Rain was drizzling and a cold wind was blowing. Mr. Taintor looked at the group of women.

"I'm worried about every one of you," he said, "except Mary. I know she's as hardy as a head of cabbage."

"Dad, aren't you unkind! You might at least have compared me to a flower of some sort."

"All the flowers I can think of at the minute," he replied, his smile broader than usual, "are either tall and slender, or small and modest.

However, Mary, I shall certainly depend on you. These others look frail, somehow."

"What's that!" exclaimed Joyce. "Not me!"

Mr. Taintor smiled at her, not averse to teasing some one besides Mary.

"Ungrammatical," he ejaculated, "but correct!"

Joyce herself was a trifle worried about Patricia, although she needn't have been, for that young lady was completely recovered from her illness.

The horses seemed to feel more skittish than usual. It took all Joyce's ability to keep her horse tractable. Little by little a feeling of nervousness invaded the party.

"What's the matter with us all?" Mary tried to laugh off the feeling of uneasiness.

"I suppose it's nothing,"—Mrs. Taintor admitted her worry,—"but I shall be glad when evening comes."

It was almost noon when they struck the bad bit of road. On one side were thick brambles; on the other a drop of twenty-five or thirty feet, which in spots lengthened to fifty or sixty feet. The rain had made the narrow road slippery, and there was no protection on either side.

Mr. Taintor paused when he came to this.

“Dear, we should have stayed on the main road this bad weather,” worried Mrs. Taintor.

“Oh, but this road is so much more picturesque,” insisted Mary.

Mr. Taintor had a worried frown.

“I’ll go first. Mary, you had better follow me, then Patricia, Joyce, and your mother can come last.”

“Oh, Dad, really I ought to bring up the rear. If any of the horses get too near the edge, I’ll dash up and shove them back.”

Mr. Taintor smiled for a second, and then the frown returned to his brow.

“Perhaps it would be wiser for you to be last. That horse of your’s is a bit gay.”

Cautiously, they started. They were nearly half over the bad stretch, had just rounded a difficult corner, when an automobile horn sounded sharply behind them. Surprised and startled, Mary reined in her horse sharply. He resented this, shied, pawed the air. Mary had him in control until a car whirled around the corner and stopped short with grinding brakes. The car skidded sideways, the horse jumped and plunged—and disappeared over the edge of the road, still bearing Mary.

For a second every one was stricken dumb; then there was a mad scramble to the edge of the road; but before any one reached it, the driver of the car was out of his seat, and sliding feet foremost down the steep bank.

“Joe!” gasped Mrs. Taintor.

Below was a heap of kicking horse and white-faced girl. Almost by bodily strength Joe seemed to lift the horse to his feet. Free, the animal managed to scramble up the steep bank. Joe bent over a silent Mary and picked her up tenderly in his strong arms.

“Go back,” he shouted to Mr. Taintor, who had started down the bank.

To climb that steep bank with the limp girl in his arms was a task no one but a giant could have performed, but Joe was a giant.

“Is she—is she—?” Mrs. Taintor, white of face, could not voice the terrible word.

Joe smiled as sweetly as a woman.

“No—Mrs. Taintor—only she faint.”

At that second Mary opened her eyes and smiled faintly at her father. A sigh of relief ran around the trembling group.

“Are you all right, Mary?”

“I—I—think so—only—my leg hurts—a good deal.”

One of the tents was set up immediately, and Mary placed in it. With fingers as skilful as a surgeon's, her father probed gently. He looked grave as he announced: "I fear there is a broken bone. I'm not sure, but I think we should see a doctor without delay."

Mr. and Mrs. Taintor and the three girls at once got into the car, leaving Joe to manage the horses and provisions. As rapidly as possible they drove to the nearest railroad station, none too near. Mary seemed perfectly comfortable between the other two girls, her leg supported stiffly in front of her.

"I don't believe it's broken, Dad."

"Perhaps not, but I want expert advice."

Mary, unconcerned over her own trouble, worried over Patricia and Joyce.

"It's just a shame to have your vacation spoiled. Five days more, and it's terrible at school with every one gone."

"Don't worry, Mary" insisted Joyce.

Mary continued to worry and fret.

"I know," Patricia had an inspiration; "we can go to see Sally Orcutt. She's been begging us to come all the year."

So it happened that while Mary and her mother and father went north to New York,

Patricia and Joyce went west to Louisville. Telegrams had preceded them, and an excited Sally met them at the station.

"Now begin at the beginning," she demanded impetuously, "and tell me every single thing that has happened since camp."

"You goose," said Patricia, hugging her, "you've seen us since then."

"I know, only at the game I was too excited to remember anything that you told me. This way, Joyce."

Sally led them to an imposing car.

"Granny and Dr. Orcutt both wanted to come, but I absolutely forbade it. I had to have you to myself for five minutes. After we reach home I know I'll never have you alone a second."

Gayly she chattered on. Joyce listened, and watched as the car swung through the noisy streets of the town, and out through quieter residence districts. It finally turned into a long, cypress-lined drive, at the end of which stood a magnificent old Colonial home.

"Sally!" gasped Joyce. "How—how gorgeous!"

"It's comfy," admitted Sally as they drew up and she jumped from the car. "Do hurry

and powder your nose. We're going out to dinner and the theatre to-night. Lee Davis has planned the party."

The three days sped by. It seemed to Joyce she could hardly catch her breath. Of all the gay doings, the one she enjoyed the most was the dance Sally gave for them in her own beautiful home.

"It's a hurry-up affair," Sally apologized. "Lee and Pete Craig really planned it. No doubt we'll have ice-cream cones for refreshments."

"Sally," accused Patricia, "you never told us about Peter Craig."

Sally smiled impishly.

"There's nothing to tell. He's got the 'proper-bug' almost as bad as Lee. Most girls are scared to death of him. I'm not. Hence he tags me around like a pet puppy dog."

"I can't imagine any one being less like a pet puppy dog than Peter Craig!"

Joyce dressed early, wearing on her shoulder the knot of orchids that Lee Davis had sent her, and went to sit quietly in the lower hall before the huge fireplace. She sat there dreaming of the scenes this house must have

witnessed in the days when men wore lace and the ladies powdered their hair. It seemed to her that some of its stately ghosts were moving about the shining floor and up the polished stairs.

"Too bad," sighed Joyce, "to frighten the beautiful dears away with our jazz music."

"Who's complaining about jazz music?"

Joyce jumped. The apparition which appeared out of the hall shadows this time was not ghostly, but real flesh and blood.

"Lee Davis! You frightened me!" Joyce smiled at him mistily.

He sat beside her on the wide settle.

"Do I always frighten you? Are you really afraid of me?" His face glowed as he looked down at her.

"Yes," Joyce nodded.

"Why—Joyce?"

"I don't know. You know so much. You have so much,"—she waved her hand vaguely,—“ancestry, heritage, these lovely possessions, so many things I lack—things I am conscious of when I'm with you.”

He looked away, hurt.

"I don't want you to feel that way with me,

Joyce. When I'm with you, I try not to be so—proper.”

“I know.” Joyce loved his boyishness. “You're a dear, Lee. I like you immensely, only you *do* frighten me.”

“Don't you realize, Joyce,” Lee was very earnest, “that you, with your sweetness and your honesty, are as much of a gentlewoman as any of these girls about you?”

Joyce jumped to her feet with a laugh.

“That's the sweetest compliment I ever received, Lee Davis. As a reward, I'll dance first of all with you.”

“Oh, I took that for granted.” Lee rose also, looking down at her with that fine glow still in his face. “And I shall probably cut in on more than half the others.”

Joyce laughed at him over her shoulder as she ran back up the stairs, leaving among the ghostly memories of that hall one small modern memory, faint and modest, but as sweet as any of it's statelier sisters.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER SCRAPE

PATRICIA and Joyce arrived in New York just at dusk. Crowds were hurrying here and there through the Grand Central Station. Patricia looked about for a Red Cap, and, to her annoyance, was unable to find one.

“I can carry our bags,” said Joyce, stanchly.

Patricia frowned.

“That is quite unnecessary. I shall find one presently. There—there is one, with those people! Why, Joyce—there’s Ray.” Patricia’s face sparkled. “Who is that with him?”

“It’s Mary Taintor! Then her leg wasn’t broken! Good!”

Joyce ran forward eagerly to greet Mary, but Patricia did not leave her post by the bags. When Raoul and Mary came up to her, the fine glow had departed from Patricia’s face.

“Oh, Mary, are you better?” Somehow her voice lacked enthusiasm.

“Yes.” Mary was jubilant. “I’m still limping a bit, but it was only a sprain. I told Dad I was all right, but he didn’t believe it. I’ve been the rounds of half a dozen doctors. And, oh, Patricia, I met the duckiest one—”

“Mary, don’t tell me you’ve discovered there is another man on earth besides your father?”

“Patricia! Aren’t you unkind!” Mary still beamed.

“Can I say ‘Hello’ now?” Ray pretended to be meek, but his eyes danced.

“I don’t know whether you ‘can’ or not, but you ‘may’,” Patricia retorted. Somehow the glow had come back into her face.

“How did you two happen to be here together?” asked Joyce.

“What? Oh, I had your wire and came down to wait for the train, and I spied Mary. Here, boy.”

Raoul summoned a Red Cap who was hurrying by. Joyce looked at him, surprised by the authority in his voice. It seemed to her that Ray had grown subtly older, more mature, more accustomed to the ways of the city. Joyce shook her head in

despair over her own gawkiness, not realizing that she, too, had developed in the past few months.

"Come along, Joyce." Mary was still jubilant. "Let me lean on your shoulder. Mother and Dad are out here in the car. We are all going to have dinner together before we go out to school."

"I should judge," said Raoul, sagely, "that your mother and father were not alone."

"They are now," Mary dimpled, "but we are going to meet Dr. Felton for dinner."

"Ah-ha!" Ray laughed.

"You're not *too* down-hearted yourself," teased Mary.

"Poor me," Joyce pretended to sigh, "I'll be the only old maid in the party."

"Old maid!" teased Patricia. "Lee Davis had to make a running jump to get off after the train had started, he was so long saying good-by to *us*." Patricia laughed merrily at the memory. "He almost knocked Peter Craig down when he landed."

"Peter Craig?" asked Raoul quickly. "Was he down to see you off?"

"Yes," said Patricia, "Peter *and* Sally."

Laughing and talking, they joined Mr. and Mrs. Taintor.

The dinner was a huge success. Dr. Felton proved to be a rather shy young man who wore glasses. Half-way through the meal Ray dropped his fork with a clatter.

“Patricia!” he gasped. “I forgot.”

“What is it?” Patricia looked alarmed.

“I had a cable from your father. They expect to land next Saturday.”

Patricia’s eyes were like stars.

“Next Saturday? You know I hadn’t realized I missed them so. Next Saturday!”

“Shall I come and get you and take you down to the pier?” asked Ray.

The girls slipped easily back into routine. Bobby arrived late on Monday morning, but found time at noon to hear a hurried account of Joyce’s vacation.

Tuesday evening the president of the senior class called a meeting to decide what play they should give that year. There was a great deal of discussion on the subject, and Joyce, sitting quietly in one corner, could not but compare this orderly, quiet meeting with the noisy gathering of her high-school class. Although this meeting was orderly

the discussions were heated. At last it was decided to produce "Cyrano de Bergerac," for, although it was difficult, it at least gave every one an opportunity to appear as a Gascony cadet if nothing else.

The leads were selected. Joyce waited with bated breath to hear Patricia's name proposed, for Patricia could act, she was stunning, had what is known as "stage presence." But Joyce listened in vain. Marion Howland was chosen as the leading lady; Fran Evans was given the part of Cyrano, although she was nowhere so well fitted for it as Philo Cornish; a girl named Estelle Holden was given preference over Mary Taintor.

"Why," remarked Joyce innocently, after the meeting was dismissed, "I didn't expect a part, but you, Patricia, and Mary and Philo,—you should all have leads. What happened?"

Patricia, furious, hurt, but too proud to show it, waited until she reached her own room before she answered.

"Don't you see?" Her eyes blazed. "Every one of those girls are club girls Fran and Marion Howland belong to Turk's

Head; Estelle Holden belongs to Orion. The clubs may be rivals and disagree, but they all hang together in a thing of this sort. I know. I've been on the inside. Oh—it's abominable!"

Intermittently during the rest of the week Patricia raved angrily or was silent with disdain, but Saturday all her troubles were forgotten in the anticipation of seeing her mother and father again.

Ray called for her early, and Joyce seeing the two depart, had rather a lonely little feeling in her heart. She sought Bobby.

"Hello, Joy of my life," Bobby teased. "Why so downcast?"

"I—I must be lonesome," admitted Joyce, disconsolately.

At once Bobby's mocking manner departed.

"Lonesome! You! Impossible! I shall have to cure you at once."

"How is it done?" Joyce was amused.

"Action! Adventure! Whenever I feel really blue, I go out and get me into a scrape. You'd be surprised what a wonderful cure it is."

"Well" said Joyce, "I have my faults, but getting into scrapes doesn't seem to be one of them."

"I know, but it's where I shine," Bobby twinkled. "Go get your coat and we'll fare forth."

Certainly nothing could have seemed a milder form of amusement than the leisurely walk the two girls began, but before they had gone three blocks, Adventure was upon them.

"Oh!" Bobby grasped Joyce's arm. "The poor, baby thing!"

She pointed. A half-grown bull terrier was trying to cross the street. He had his tail between his legs and was dodging passing cars right and left. Bobby started into the street after him, but was detained by Joyce's hand.

"Wait!" she counselled.

With bated breath the two girls watched while the dog came nearer and nearer. Suddenly a car, passing the one in front of it, obscured the dog. There was a yelp. Bobby shook off Joyce's hand and dashed into the street. She was back in a minute, the puppy shivering in her arms.

"Poor little beastie," she said as she patted the sleek head, "I don't know whether the car hit him or not. He was flat on his

back, all four paws up, puppy-fashion, when I reached him. I don't think he's hurt, only badly scared."

The puppy whimpered and tried to lick Bobby's hand with its moist pink tongue.

"Poor little fellow!" Joyce bent over it. Then she straightened. "What are you going to do with him, Bobby?" she asked practically.

"I hadn't thought of that!" Bobby looked worried. "No doubt he's lost, but until some one advertises, I'm going to keep him," defiantly. "I'm not going to let him run loose."

"Well and good, keep him,—but where?"

"I might smuggle him up to my room." Bobby looked dubious.

"You might!" admitted Joyce. "And then, on the other hand, Miss Hodges might find him. Can't you take him home?"

Bobby shook her head.

"Mother and Dad have gone away for a couple of weeks again. That's why I'm at school on Saturday. None of the servants would pay any attention to him except—" A smile replaced the worried look in Bobby's eyes. "I know what I'll do. I'll take him out to the menagerie."

With Bobby, to decide was to act. Despite Joyce's protests, the two girls were soon speeding along in a hired car toward the Howland country home, the dog happily snuggled in Bobby's arms.

Bobby's menagerie was originally a small garage, but it had been equipped with wire pens and runways, with feeding-pans and water-dishes. There were very few animals in it just now,—three cats, a lame dog, and an evil-eyed old goat. While Bobby made the rounds, talking volubly to Herman, the caretaker, Joyce wandered out to enjoy the glorious spring air. Not a great ways off, the small lake glistened and dimpled. Joyce made her way down to its shores, and then she had the surprise of her life.

Seated on a stone, gazing at the lake, sat Roy Walker. Joyce gasped in surprise.

"You're late, Marion," Roy turned as he spoke, and then he gasped, too. He jumped to his feet. "Why, Miss Hunter, this is an unexpected pleasure."

"Is it?" asked Joyce, wishing desperately that Bobby would come. She did not want to run. That would look foolish, but if Miss Hodges heard she had met Roy away out here,

there would most certainly be trouble. She could explain, of course, but explanations never really mean anything. "I—I must be going now."

"Oh, don't rush!" the words were extremely sarcastic. Joyce whirled to see who had spoken. Behind her stood Marion Howland, looking lovelier than ever. She gazed from one to the other. "So, Roy, this is whom you really came out to meet instead of me. Was I supposed to chaperon you? Well, let me tell you, this is one time you miscalculated."

Her head held high in fury, she turned and walked away. Joyce ran after her a few steps, calling her name, but Marion refused to answer.

"You might as well come back," counselled Roy Walker, as Joyce stood disconsolately watching Marion disappear.

Joyce stood still, undecided, when a tiny squeak behind her made her jump. She turned, but nothing was visible. A voice, coming seemingly out of a stone, said: "I'm a little mouse and—Why, Roy Walker!"

Joyce whirled again as Bobby came running up.

"Joyce, I thought you were alone. I was practising ventriloquism on you."

"Well, I'm not alone," Joyce was decidedly worried.

"Where did you come from?" Bobby whirled on Roy Walker.

He raised his eyebrows, smiled sarcastically, and refused to answer.

"If you expect to meet Marion here—" Bobby began angrily, but Joyce interrupted: "He has already seen her. I mean, she just came down and thought I was here to meet him."

Bobby's mouth dropped open.

"Whee! That does mean trouble."

She caught Joyce's hand and started to run.

"Come on," she said, entirely forgetting Roy Walker, leaving him to take care of his own interests.

"Where?" gasped Joyce.

"Hurry. I want to catch Marion before she sees Miss Hodges."

"Why?" panted Joyce.

"She was mad, wasn't she?" Bobby paused a minute and looked at Joyce. Joyce nodded in reply, too out of breath to speak.

"When Marion loses her temper, she always does something foolish. No doubt she'll go straight to Miss Hodges and tattle on you."

“Oh—no. I haven’t done a thing.”

“Marion thinks you have. It amounts to the same thing. Hurry!”

Bobby was off again toward their hired car. Although she urged the driver and he did his utmost, Marion had several minutes’ start in her own roadster, and she drove well. The taxi was further delayed by a blow-out and a necessary change of tire.

The girls reached the school fully half an hour after Marion.

“You go right to your room,” counselled Bobby. “I’ll see Hodge-Podge. I’ll know in a minute if Marion has said anything. If she hasn’t, I’ll find her and make her keep quiet.”

Joyce went quickly to her room, her heart palpitating. When she opened the door, she saw Patricia.

“Why, Patricia,” she gasped. “You here?”

“Yes.” Patricia was disturbed. “Where have you been, Joyce?”

“Why?” Joyce’s spirits dropped.

“Miss Hodges was just up here looking for you.”

“Oh, no!” Joyce sat down suddenly on the edge of the bed.

“She was perfectly furious. I had just come in. I came out to school to change my dress and get you. Dad and Mother are here,” Patricia’s face lighted, “and they want you and Ray and me to go to dinner down-town with them. Ray is coming back for us. I asked Miss Hodges for permission for you, and she said ‘Absolutely not.’ What is wrong?”

Near tears, Joyce poured out the whole tale. Patricia listened silently, and then, in a towering rage, went to seek Miss Hodges. Whatever passed between Patricia and her teacher, Joyce never knew. Joyce was not allowed to go down-town to dinner. However, she insisted, and Patricia went, still too angry to speak, leaving Joyce to spend the evening with a penitent, regretful Bobby.

“Joycie, you dear kid, I’m always getting you into trouble. I don’t mind for myself, but I do hate to see you down-hearted. Miss Hodges wouldn’t believe my side of it. Miss Brent is away. Never mind. We’ll get out of it, some way. And I’ll be reformed—forever!”

CHAPTER XVIII

GRADUATION

ALTHOUGH Joyce was very much in disgrace with Miss Hodges, and was again denied privileges until the end of the year, school continued the same as ever.

Basket-ball season was over now, and the big event was the senior play. Patricia went to rehearsals, but she did so unwillingly. She felt the injustice of being placed in a minor part, and she was still very angry at Marion Howland for her treatment of Joyce. All the club girls rallied around Marion and ignored Patricia. Patricia tossed her head and pretended she did not care. Graduation was only a few weeks off, and after that she could go wherever she pleased—but the play must be put on first.

A special hall was hired for the performance, since each girl was allowed to invite guests, and no place in the school was large enough to accommodate so many persons. The stage was strange, the girls had only two rehearsals on it beside the dress rehearsal, and they were all nervous on the final night.

Joyce and Bobby had been among the girls chosen to usher. Joyce had not been allowed to take part in the play, but she was given this privilege. Marion had chosen Bobby, and Bobby refused to go unless Joyce was invited, too. The school authorities allowed Joyce this privilege, since the hall was temporarily school-grounds. Radiantly happy, Joyce dressed in a simple, becoming frock and went with Bobby to the hall.

The crowd was larger than had been expected. The ushers were kept busy running back and forth, making mistakes, correcting them. After every one was seated, Joyce and Bobby went "back stage" to rest.

"My goodness!" Joyce dropped into an old discarded chair; "I didn't know there were so many people in the world."

"I'm tired, too."

"The play is most certainly going to be a success. It's a shame Patricia hasn't a major part."

"There are your old clubs again," said Bobby vindictively. "Miss Brent's would really be heaps of fun if it wasn't for those things. Really, I don't believe I shall come back next year on account of them."

“Oh, no, Bobby,” protested Joyce.

“You don’t know how I hate them!”

The girls watched from the wings as the play progressed. It was going splendidly, although Fran Evans was anything but a typical Cyrano. During a balcony scene Patricia joined Bobby and Joyce. Standing there idly, the girls talked in whispers.

“It’s going well,” said Patricia.

“Yes, considering everything,” said Bobby judicially.

“What do you mean?” asked Patricia.

“You and Philo Cornish should both have had leads. But these clubs—” Bobby cast her eyes upward. Then her gaze froze. She grasped Patricia’s wrist and said in a shrill, high voice:

“Patricia! Look! What’s that?”

“Bobby—ssh!” whispered Patricia. “Are you trying to break up the show because I—?”

“No! No! Patricia—look! It’s fire!” The last was a shriek.

Patricia looked then. A thin red streak was creeping along the top of one of the wings. A slight acrid smell of smoke reached the girls.

“What shall we do?” Bobby was in a panic.

“Joyce, get Bobby away where the people out there won’t hear her.” Patricia was all efficiency. “I’ll get Fran and Marion off the stage. Tell whoever is back there to drop the asbestos curtain. Get the other girls out.”

Patricia stepped quickly onto the stage to warn the girls who were acting, but she was too late. Bobby’s cry had preceded her. A white-faced Fran Evans was running in circles, Marion was getting down from her improvised balcony, and out in front pandemonium reigned.

“Get out of here, quick!” Patricia warned the girls. Then she turned and called to the people below her:

“Please be quiet. There is no danger. The curtain will soon drop.”

She might as well have talked to the waves of the sea. The hall was not provided with the usual exits, and, conscious of this, every one was pushing in mad frenzy for the rear doors. Patricia realized that danger from panic was much greater than danger from fire, but she was helpless. She wrung her hands for a minute and called again. Then suddenly she raised her voice in song, the stirring, marching song of the Toreador.

Below her, part of the panic-stricken orchestra dropped back into its place. In two minutes that tune was swinging through the hall. Unconsciously, people slowed, fell into the march step, calmed.

The fire was beginning to sputter and hiss behind Patricia now. The asbestos curtain had stuck! For a minute the girl gazed over her shoulder and her heart leaped, but not for one second did that high clear voice stop.

Then another clear voice from away up near the front doors called out, "The danger is over. Take your time!"

It was Bobby's voice. Patricia wondered how she had got around there so quickly. Even as she wondered, Bobby staggered through the flame and smoke and fell against Patricia.

"Get out, Patricia. Go the front way," she gasped. "It's—terrible—back—there!"

She crumpled into a heap at Patricia's feet.

Patricia stopped her singing to lean over Bobby. The crowd was nearly out now.

"Bobby! Bobby, what's wrong?"

"Ashamed—coward—came back," mumbled Bobby.

Patricia tried to lift her up.

"Go on," gasped Bobby. "Never mind me. I'm through."

Terror-stricken, Patricia gazed about. Behind her, the stage was a mass of flames. She stepped forward to appeal to the pianoplayer, but he had left abruptly when Patricia had stopped singing. The place was deserted. Patricia tried to drag Bobby a few steps.

"Go on," gasped Bobby. "Go on."

"No—no—"

Then from the wings, from the very flames themselves apparently, his coat over his head, dashed Raoul. He caught Bobby up easily and jumped into the orchestra pit.

"Come on, Patricia," he called. "It's our only chance."

Patricia climbed agilely down, the flames hissing and licking behind her.

In a few seconds the three of them were in the open air, surrounded by an excited crowd.

Bobby was the only one who suffered any ill effects from the fire. All the other girls and the entire audience escaped unharmed, thanks to Patricia's efficiency and calmness. Needless to say, she not only regained her

old place of prominence in the school, but was constantly sought after, the center of one admiring group after another. The entire school united in voting her the most wonderful girl in their midst, to the complete elimination of Marion Howland.

Marion did not heed. She was a very subdued girl as she sat by Bobby's bedside, for Bobby was thought to be in a serious condition. She had swallowed much smoke getting to Patricia, and had received several burns, two of which might prove serious. She was taken at once to her own home. Doctors and nurses were in constant attendance. Marion never moved from her bedside. Mr. and Mrs. Howland were hurrying home, but of all this Bobby was scarcely conscious. She lay tossing and turning in pain for the most part, although occasionally she broke forth into wild raving.

She called incessantly for Patricia and for Joyce. Patricia went at once to her bedside, but Joyce dare not, since she had already broken bounds three times during the year. Nearly frantic, she paced her room. If she could only reach Miss Brent. She would not appeal to Miss Hodges, knowing it would

be useless, and worse. And she could not find Miss Brent. It never occurred to her that the owner of the school would also be with Bobby.

But Miss Brent *was* with Bobby.

“Joyce,” moaned Bobby. “Joyce, please come.”

Miss Brent looked in surprise at Marion and Patricia.

“Why isn't Joyce here? Was she hurt, too?”

Marion shook her head miserably, and then suddenly the truth came out.

Miss Brent merely raised her eyebrows.

“Joyce,” moaned Bobby, tossing wildly, “do come. Don't let those old clubs hold you. Look out!” A scream. “Marion—get Joyce. The clubs are burning her—ah-h-h!” Her voice died away in a low moan.

Miss Brent looked at the prostrate girl curiously.

“Patricia, you and Marion go and bring Joyce Hunter here. I wish to be alone with Roberta for a while.”

* * * * *

The excitement of the fire had scarcely died down before it was Commencement time.

Bobby made a rapid recovery, and, though still very pale and much bandaged, she managed to attend the graduation exercises.

These were held in the school hall, and only parents and very close friends were invited. In the audience were Mr. and Mrs. Strickland, Mr. and Mrs. Howland, Mr. and Mrs. Taintor, Raoul, Roy Walker, Lee Davis. Tears gathered in Bobby's eyes, Bobby who was never given to crying, as she looked up and saw leaving the school, Patricia, Joyce, Philo Cornish, Mary Taintor, and her own sister, Marion.

"I'll be all alone next year," she thought to herself. "No one to help me fight those old clubs."

But Bobby was much mistaken. As Miss Brent advanced to present the diplomas, she stopped near the front of the platform, a tall, dignified, stately woman. She announced very calmly that, from then on, clubs would be absolutely abolished in her school, and very easily and confidentially she explained why, both to parents and girls. Bobby chuckled as she saw the looks of consternation on the faces of Fran Evans and Helen Trowbridge.

The diplomas were given out, and the graduates mingled with their guests.

Roy Walker strode confidently up to Marion Howland, but Marion had a sudden and urgent engagement elsewhere. Then he sought Joyce, but Joyce was eagerly talking to Lee Davis.

"I was so surprised to see you," Joyce informed Lee.

"I thought you would be," he said. "I used Sally's invitation."

"Why, Lee!" was all Joyce could say.

"A terrible thing to do—not proper at all," he admitted. "I wasn't sure that I could persuade them that my name was Sally Orcutt, but I managed." He dropped his bantering tone. "I just had to see you, Joyce. I wanted to send you flowers, but I couldn't think of any sweet enough for you."

"Oh, Lee," Joyce dropped her eyes, "you—you—"

But before she could answer him, Raoul and Patricia, Bobby and Mary Taintor, joined them.

"Here we all are, like a bunch of bananas," said Bobby, "and to-morrow, or, at the very

latest, the next day, we'll be—everywhere else.”

“Not very explicit, Bobby,” Patricia laughed. “Anyway, I've learned one thing this year.”

“What?” asked Ray.

“Who my true friends are. How I hate to part from you all.” She threw out her arms.

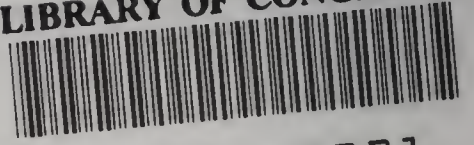
Joyce gazed about.

“Patricia,” she said, softly “Miss Hodges no longer has authority over us, and I don't believe Miss Brent would mind if we went over by that piano, and sang, very, very softly, our usual farewell song.”

And so, in subdued, sweet voices, joined finally by Raoul and Lee Davis, the girls sang:

“Until we meet again.”

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